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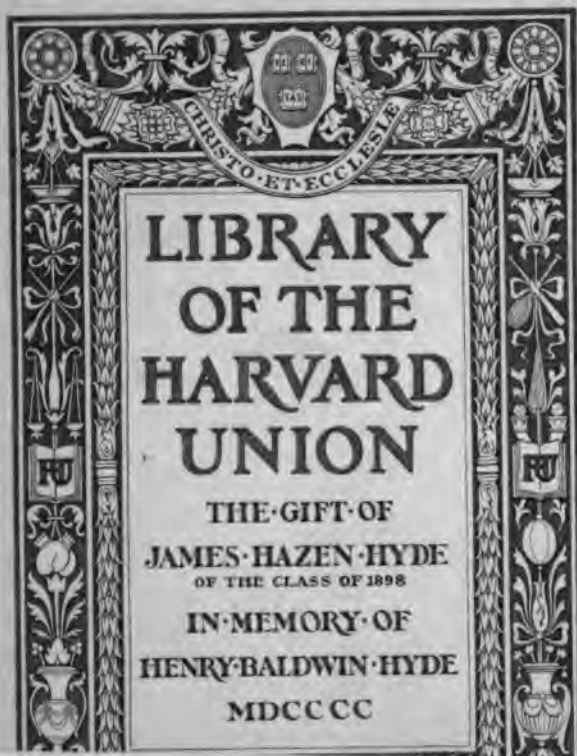
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The Scholar's Daughter



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The Scholar's Daughter



The Scholar's Daughter

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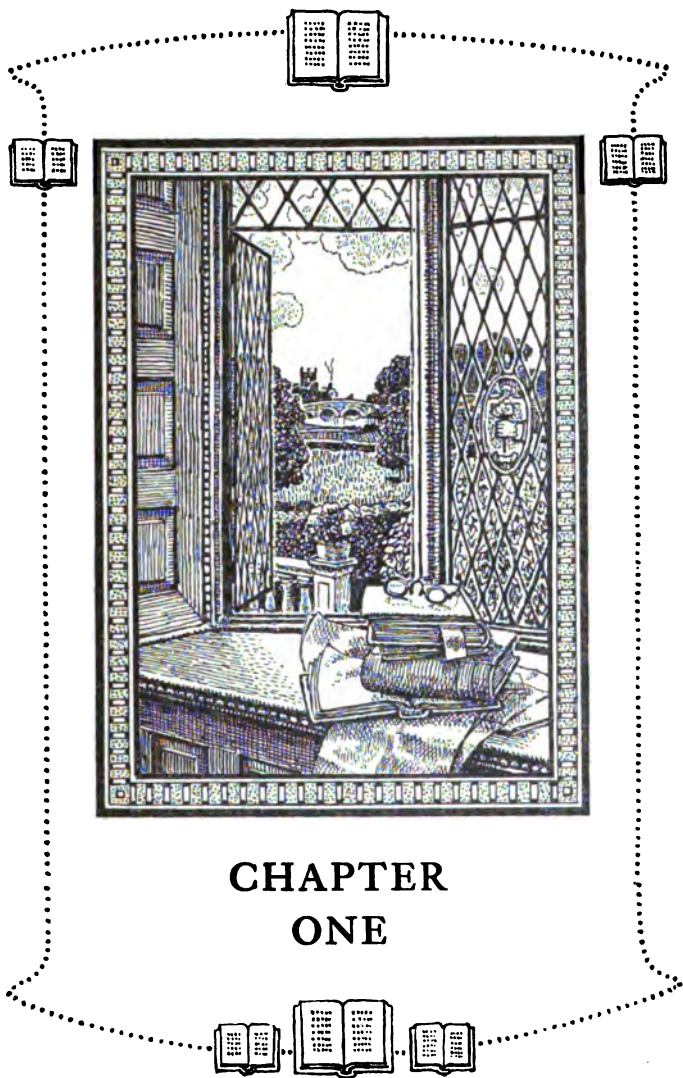
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The Scholar's Daughter



CHAPTER I

THE BOOK-WORMS WAIT

THE clock struck half-past three. Professor Grant's three secretaries, Mr. Gulliver, Mr. Hetherly, and Mr. Winter, laid down their pens and leaned back in their chairs.

"Miss Geraldine will soon be here," said Gulliver. "Her train was due at two."

"Yes," said Mr. Winter. "The cob generally takes two hours to do the journey, but she will hurry him up."

"She hurries us all up," said Mr. Hetherly.

"Yes," said Mr. Gulliver, with a radiant smile on his face. "And how different the house becomes when she steps into it."

"Yes," said the others, smiling too.

The sun of a summer's afternoon was streaming into the old oak-panelled library of the Yew House. It lit up the books, the first proofs, the revises, the rows of mysterious slips of paper, the endless volumes of reference and all the other paraphernalia of dictionary making. For here, in a picturesque old manor house dating back to the Tudors, in the heart

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of the country, remote from railroads and some distance off from any other habitation, Professor Grant and his secretaries had been for years engaged in the compilation of a dictionary which was to be the abiding pride of the Anglo-Saxon race. In the outside world nations were making war with each other, or peace, or treaties. Serious economic problems were presenting themselves for discussion and solution. But no crisis in the history of events had ever disturbed the quiet atmosphere of this abode of scholars, and time itself had scarcely touched them. Mr. Hetherly, who was short and had a legal face, prided himself on his deep knowledge of human nature. The only change in him as the years went on was the strengthening of that vain belief. Mr. Winter was rather tall, and stooped unduly. Perhaps his stoop increased a little, but otherwise there was no alteration in his mild and meditative aspect. Mr. Gulliver had doubtless been born with the appearance of a typical book-worm, and was destined to remain in permanent possession of this honourable distinction, which was, however, shared in a lesser degree by the others. No one could have mistaken them for anything else except book-worms, and Geraldine herself had recognised this at an early

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age. She had called them "the book-worms" for more than twelve years now, and their title had come to be looked upon by all of the household as a term of affection and respect. Waiting for her arrival this very afternoon, they probably fancied they could already hear her fresh young voice crying their name in the garden or the courtyard. In any case the thought of her was haunting them, and the necessity of speaking about her was too urgent to be quelled.

"It was six months the day before yesterday since she was home," said Mr. Winter. "And now having passed her examinations, perhaps she will settle down amongst us and join us in our great work."

"Oh, I don't think she will ever be content to do that," Mr. Gulliver said, with a sigh and a grave shake of his head. "She has always hated working at the Dictionary, though, when she chooses, she can do a fine piece of scholarship. She has a wonderful grasp of etymology, hasn't she?"

"Yes, indeed," said the others enthusiastically, and they smiled again, their smile this time being a subtle mixture of the impersonal admiration of scholars and the personal feeling of real living men.

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"Her ease and quickness of perception are highly remarkable," said Mr. Winter.

"Yes," said Mr. Hetherly. "She sits down to her task as if she were going to amuse herself, and gets up gaily, having sorted and sifted out innumerable spellings, changes in meaning, obsolete forms and variants."

"It would be invaluable if she could be induced to work regularly on the Dictionary," remarked Mr. Winter. "We might then have some chance of reaching the middle of letter E in five years' time from now. What do you think, Mr. Gulliver?"

"Highly doubtful," answered Mr. Gulliver, "even with her help. Dictionaries cannot be hurried. They have to proceed with dignity and caution. Oh, of course, I am not referring to the pocket variety. That is only the growth of days, hours. But a great undertaking like ours has necessarily to be the slow growth of years of thought and labour."

"You are right," said Mr. Winter humbly, as he took up his pen and bent over his desk again. "One must not let oneself be impatient."

"Human nature will always be impatient," said Mr. Hetherly, closing his eyes.

No one disputed this remarkable statement,

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and for a few minutes there was silence in the library, the three book-worms making a determined effort to forget about the Professor's daughter and bury themselves in their duties. Mr. Gulliver was the first to capitulate to circumstance. He pushed his papers gently away, and leaned back in his chair once more.

"Concentration is an impossible matter sometimes, isn't it?" he said, a little apologetically.

"I should be inclined to say that we are merely changing the subject of our concentration," suggested Mr. Hetherly; and they all laughed softly and with a sigh of relief relaxed from the tension of comparative philology.

"You see," said Mr. Winter, "she has to choose her profession immediately on finishing her examinations. Surely when we have her amongst us again, we shall be able to influence her to adopt the profession of dictionary maker."

"I fear she will not choose the scholar's life," said Mr. Gulliver, with some sadness. And he added half to himself:

"I wonder what colour she will be wearing: blue or grey. But anything suits her."

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"What was that you were saying?" asked Mr. Hetherly. "Something about anything suiting her? You are right. Whatever profession she chooses, she will shine in. She was born to shine."

"Yes," said Mr. Gulliver, who had blushed a little guiltily. "Miss Geraldine will succeed in all she undertakes."

"I shall never understand Professor Grant," said Mr. Winter. "He is unnaturally stern with her. Why should she have to earn her own living at all? And even if he insists on that, why should he be intending to leave all his money to the Dictionary?"

"She will have a small annuity," said Mr. Hetherly. "You forget that."

"No, I don't forget it," answered Mr. Winter. "But you know it is so small that it does not alter the fact that she will have to depend on her own efforts."

"Professor Grant has theories, as we all know," said Mr. Gulliver.

"Well, I've heard from outside sources that people do strange things with their money," said Mr. Winter. "But I never heard of a father making his will in favour of a dictionary instead of a daughter. Of course, I mean no disrespect to the Dictionary."

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"The Professor has theories, as Mr. Gulliver has just reminded us," said Mr. Hetherly. "And he is probably of the opinion that women are extravagant creatures, and that they are better without money."

"In justice to the Professor, I must remind you that he has given Miss Geraldine a good education," said Mr. Gulliver. "That in itself means money."

"Not necessarily," said Mr. Hetherly, closing his eyes.

"It hasn't been my experience," said Mr. Winter ruefully.

"Perhaps Mr. Gulliver by his scholastic attainments has been able to amass a secret fortune," said Mr. Hetherly gravely, turning to Mr. Winter. "I think he might have allowed us, his colleagues of many years, to share the secret if not the fortune."

Mr. Gulliver laughed. He liked a little gentle teasing.

"If you remember," said Mr. Winter, "Mr. Gulliver has always been a mysterious personage. We know from outside sources that he has had many chances of bettering his position. Yet he has preferred to remain on here in this obscure life."

"That is all explained by the secret for-

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tune," said Mr. Hetherly, with a twinkle in his eye. "But you and I have not had that incentive, Mr. Winter? Why have you, for instance, cared to remain on?"

"Oh, I'm not ambitious," answered Mr. Winter, "and the very thought of the unknown has always scared me. And then, you see, one gets attached to the soil, as it were—to the Dictionary and the Professor and Miss Geraldine. Yes, and the Yew House, too. It would be a great wrench to go. I couldn't face it."

"Nor could I," said Mr. Hetherly.

"Nor I," said Mr. Gulliver.

There was a pause for a moment, and Mr. Hetherly remarked:

"Well, to return to Miss Geraldine's small annuity. I have always told you it was immaterial to the real issues whether Professor Grant left his money to his daughter or his Dictionary. She will get married. Some lucky stranger, richer even than Mr. Gulliver, will claim her."

"And we who have known her and watched her grow up for twelve years or more will have to stand aside," said Mr. Gulliver.

"Yes, that is the way things go," answered Mr. Hetherly. "We shall lose her."

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"We shall lose her," the other book-worms repeated with alarm.

Mr. Hetherly nodded, and during the silence that followed on his statement, the library door opened, and a man who had the unmistakable air of a sailor came hurriedly into the room. He was armed with a feather brush and a large duster. This was Davy, formerly a coast-guardsman, and now house-parlourmaid in Professor Grant's household. The cook was Christian, a Norwegian ship's cook, and the third member of this strange staff was Tom, an old soldier, blind of one eye, but far-seeing with the other.

Davy's round face was habitually cheerful, but on this occasion it was radiant with pleasure.

"You'll excuse me, sirs, if I dust round a little bit before Miss Geraldine comes," he said, pretending to wait for the book-worms' permission.

"Of course, of course, Davy," they said in chorus. "Pray do what you please."

"I hadn't a moment this morning," Davy went on. "There was so much to be done to her room. Wanted to have it extra ship-shape for her, you know. And Christian wouldn't help with the silver. He'd made up his mind to

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pickle some onions. And wild horses won't turn him a hair's breadth."

"As I've remarked before, human nature can never be influenced whether over onions or opinions," said Mr. Hetherly, closing his eyes.

"Tom wanted to do the dusting," continued Davy. "He's willing enough, is Tom, but a man with one eye can't make a good job of the dusting. So I set him to gather roses. There must be some flowers in the house to welcome Miss Geraldine home."

"I'll go and bring some flowers," said Mr. Gulliver, jumping up from his desk. "I wish I had thought of it before. There are some lovely lilies in the Ladies' Garden."

"It is a most curious thing how book-learning dulls one's intelligence," said Mr. Winter uneasily, watching the door close after Mr. Gulliver.

"Yes, and how human beings seem to sink into insignificance as compared with books," said Mr. Hetherly. "Do you know, I've often thought that if there was a fire in this house, I should want to rescue the books first. That splendid edition of Boccaccio yonder, for instance. I couldn't bear that it should be con-

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sumed by the flames. I see I've shocked you, Davy."

"Ah," said Davy, pausing a moment in his work, "you gentlemen are too much taken up with books. You have thoughts for nothing else. Not one of you offered to drive in with Christian to meet Miss Geraldine at the station."

"I wish we'd thought of it!" exclaimed the two book-worms, turning to each other in annoyance.

"But there! It can't be helped now," encouraged Davy. "It's too late to worry now. And she'll soon be home. Lord bless my soul! Some life in the house! Some one that talks and laughs!"

He brightened up increasingly as he spoke, and made a vigorous dusting attack on the nearest armchair: something in the nature of torpedo warfare.

"Talk!" he continued, "I should think she could talk! And laugh! I should think she could laugh. And what a life she'll lead me! Davy here and Davy there. Up the rigging and down the rigging to please her. All duties. Lady's maid, nurse, cook's mate, bo'sun, pilot, coast-guard, cabin-boy. And wouldn't change

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my berth with anyone in the service when Miss Geraldine comes home."

"Hush, Davy! Carriage wheels!" cried the book-worms, starting up excitedly.

Then outside in the courtyard was heard a young laugh and a fresh young voice:

"Hullo, Mr. Gulliver! Awfully glad to see you! Blessings on your devoted head! What lovely roses and lilies! How clever of you to pick them yourself! And where are the other dear book-worms? And that lazy wretch Davy?"



CHAPTER TWO



CHAPTER II

GERALDINE OPENS THE WINDOWS

THEY pressed forward to greet her and she shook hands with them several times, danced about a little, and finally landed in the arm-chair. She was in the height of good spirits, obviously in perfect health, and radiant in her youthfulness. Ten years fell away from each man's roll of time; and as there were three book-worms, one coast-guardsman, and one Norwegian ship's cook, fifty years were put to instant flight by the magic of her personality.

"Well," she said gaily, "I'm awfully glad to be home again. I've been longing to see you all. I've been homesick for everyone and everything—even the ridiculous Dictionary. Why didn't some of you come and meet me? Too busy, I suppose. Fancy leaving me to the mercies of Christian, who has been talking the whole time about his longings for his native country. Aren't you ashamed of yourselves? Here, Christian! Don't stand staring at me as though you were a Norwegian mountain. Go and bring my bicycle in carefully, and see that Tom doesn't put my luggage into the stables

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and carry the dog-cart into my bedroom. And Davy, fetch tea instantly, and we'll have it here in the library, as Father is away. I say, how lovely the bowling-green looks, doesn't it?"

Christian had already withdrawn, smiling in his grim Norwegian fashion, and Davy was darting off when he was recalled.

"Davy, my hand-bag at once, and the scent bottle out of it," Geraldine said. "And a few cushions out of the drawing-room. And open the window at once! Shade of Samuel Johnson, what an atmosphere! I don't believe an ounce of air has been let in since I left home six months ago. You all look pale, and no wonder."

Davy flung open the window and was rushing off to his many other duties, when he was again recalled.

"Davy, here, take my hat," said the tyrant. "Look out for the pins. And give me the looking-glass and comb out of the satchel. Oh, yes, and my fan. And tell Christian I want buttered toast for tea and two eggs, and to look sharp, as I'm starving. And while I remember it, here's some tobacco to keep you all in a good temper; for I want loads of things done for me, simply loads. I've never wanted so much done in all my life."

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Davy received with ready satisfaction the tins of tobacco without which Geraldine never travelled on these occasions of her return home. She deemed them as necessary to her journey as a bird's wings for its flight. She smiled when she handed them to the coast-guardsmen, keeping up the old joke of telling him it was the finest grown tobacco from her own estates.

"It has another label on," she added, "but what do labels matter? Aren't we all labelled wrong? I'm supposed to be a scholar, dear book-worms. But I'm not one, thank goodness."

"Oh, but you are one," said the book-worms reproachfully.

"We have been talking about your remarkable gifts this very afternoon," said Mr. Gulliver, "and we have been hoping with all our hearts that you will feel inclined to stay at home and work at the Dictionary."

"Let me see," said Geraldine, putting her hand up to her forehead as if torn with thought. "I wonder how far you have got in that stupid old Dictionary. You ought certainly to have arrived at the beginning of letter B by this time."

"The beginning of letter B!" they all exclaimed in injured surprise.

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"We cannot work as quickly as you, Miss Geraldine," Mr. Gulliver remarked, smiling indulgently at her. "No, we've only got to the end of the volume A.V.X."

He rose as he spoke, and lifted the book down from the shelf. He showed it to her with a scholar's pride.

"But, Mr. Gulliver, that is precisely where I left you six months ago," laughed Geraldine, teasing him. "What on earth have you been doing?"

"You are forgetting the wide scope of the work," said Mr. Gulliver.

"Yes, I apologise humbly," she laughed. "I'm afraid I was forgetting!"

She gave the book a friendly pat; for although she pretended to despise the Dictionary, she had a real affection for it, and would not have allowed anyone but herself to insult it.

"Stupid, old, useless thing, isn't it?" she added. "Still I suppose we must all stand by it to the bitter end. But if you've only got as far as A.V.X., you evidently do want my valuable help. And perhaps I'll give it. I don't mind in the least working at the Dictionary by fits and starts. It is only the dull monotony of the permanent that I fear."

"There is some talk of a new secretary to

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be added to our number," said Mr. Winter. "Indeed we have heard from outside sources that Professor Grant is even now negotiating with a particularly brilliant scholar. But we are hoping the whole time that—that in spite of your reluctance you will be induced to choose the Dictionary as your profession."

"Never," said Geraldine. "I simply couldn't stand it, Mr. Winter. It would kill me. Why, I would much prefer to serve in a sausage-shop."

"A sausage-shop does not sound stimulating," remarked Mr. Hetherly, gravely. "I should say there was a certain monotony even about sausages. I know we felt that to be the case when Christian gave us pork sausages for three weeks running."

"What a shame!" said Geraldine. "But I'll take over the housekeeping now, and you shall have no monotony of diet. Ah, here comes the tea. How jolly to pour out for you all again. Let me see. Mr. Gulliver, one piece of sugar; Mr. Winter, two pieces; Mr. Hetherly, three; myself four. What a memory I have, haven't I?"

"Yes, indeed," they said in chorus, as they drew their chairs close round her, all of them quietly happy and excited in their own various

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fashions. For they were her old friends and comrades of twelve years' standing; they had seen her grow from childhood into girlhood, and from girlhood into young womanhood; they had known all her woes and joys and naughtinesses, and, conspirators for her protection, had unfailingly helped to screen her from her father's stern methods. In this house full of men, where no woman except herself was allowed to come, the motherless little girl had nevertheless found gentle fostering. She at least could not look back and say that she had not been tended: by unusual methods perhaps, but none the less kindly for that. So she sat in the midst of her tried and trusty book-worms, giving all the news she could of her six months' absence, and hearing details about the Dictionary, apprehensions about the proposed new secretary, and scholarly harassments over derivations and cognates, synonyms, attributives, combinations and changes of meaning. Her bright eyes twinkled with mischief whilst she gave her whole attention and sympathetic thought to these appalling difficulties, and when she learnt that a rival dictionary was being compiled on more advanced lines, she laughed with encouraging scorn.

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"On more advanced lines, indeed!" she said; "Why, I never heard of anything so ridiculous. There are no lines worth thinking of except ours! Cheer up, dear book-worms! Light up your cigarettes! Give me a match, Mr. Winter. Here, look at my gold bangle. What do you think of it? Don't you let it out to Father, but it's my gold medal from last year, melted down."

"Your gold medal!" they cried, much shocked.

"Yes," answered Geraldine. "Isn't it decorative?"

"Yes," said Mr. Gulliver, trying to sympathise; "it's a pretty thing, but—but it is not academic, is it?"

"You never heard me pretend I was academic," she replied. "I don't know what I am. I think I am a sort of intellectual, dressy, ballroom, classical and mathematical mongrel."

"Might I suggest the word 'composite' as a substitute for the word 'mongrel'?" put in Mr. Hetherly.

"Certainly," she said, "and it sounds better, doesn't it? A ballroom, mathematical and classical composite."

"Well, I have only heard of ballrooms from

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outside sources," said Mr. Winter. "But I can well believe you would grace them as no one else would."

"Classics were always your forte," said Mr. Hetherly.

"You always found mathematics easy," said Mr. Gulliver.

"How you all believe in me, you dear old things," said Geraldine warmly, "and how I wish I wanted to work at the Dictionary. But I have not the vocation for it. It was a mistake of Father's to make a scholar of me. I was not intended for anything of the kind. I have never once heard the call. No, I was only intended for one solitary thing, and I *have* heard the call for that."

"And what is it?" asked the book-worms.

"Try and guess," she urged. "It is something miles away from scholarship."

They shook their heads gravely, giving up as hopeless the solution of a problem which was outside the region of learning.

"Well, I'll tell you," she said. "It's acting. Yes, I want to be an actress. There now! I've told you my secret, which has been seething in me for years."

"Acting!" they repeated, staring at her in astonishment. She was standing in the midst

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of them, a flush of excitement on her pretty young face, an eagerness born of enthusiasm in her brown eyes, and the confidence of an attractive personality in her easy bearing. She was dressed in muslin of a delicate blue shade, which set off to advantage her light brown hair and fresh complexion. Her slight figure and graceful proportions made her appear rather taller than her actual height; and at this critical moment she had drawn herself up, playfully defying the opinion of her book-worms.

"Yes," she said, "acting. That is to be my profession. It fulfills all my requirements: an audience; publicity; the opportunity of expressing oneself; the giving of the thrill; the getting of the thrill; the appeal direct; the answer direct. Oh, don't look so absurdly bewildered. Don't you understand what I mean? You cannot say that you do not know anything about it, for it is all to be found in the volume A. C. Z. Look it out, Mr. Gulliver. No, give it to me. Acting. Here it is. 'The art of representing the emotions.' There! What have you to say now? It is in the dear old Dictionary."

"Like many other things, Miss Geraldine," said Mr. Gulliver, "its best place is in the Dictionary."

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"It scarcely seems human," remarked Mr. Winter, pensively.

"I should like to remark that it is generally considered very human," said Mr. Hetherly, closing his eyes. "Very human."

"You will break your father's heart, Miss Geraldine," said Mr. Gulliver. "He is so absolutely set against the theatre in any form."

"Don't talk to me about breaking Father's heart, Mr. Gulliver," she replied. "You know he has not any heart to break. I'm not criticising him. I am merely making a statement. A man cannot help having been born with a piece of dried-up leather instead of a heart. Of course, he will be angry, but that's another matter. I can see him now."

"We can see him," said Mr. Winter, and the other men nodded.

"Yes," continued Geraldine, "he will be very angry, and he'll put on his patent rattle-snake look and he'll say: 'My daughter, you disappoint me grievously. I have brought you up to be a scholar. I have given you the environment suitable to and worthy of a scholar. I have kept from you all frivolous companions of the other sex, and all companions of your own sex. I have hoped that your mind

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would devote itself entirely to learned contemplation. And you tell me that your one and only desire is to become an actress. Geraldine, you surprise me.' My word!" she added with a sigh, "it will not be an easy interview. But you will all stand by me, won't you?"

"Of course, we will stand by you," answered Mr. Gulliver, "but how can we alter the situation? Your father's fixed idea is that you should lead the scholar's life."

"Oh, yes, you can help," she said, "you can tell him that I am no longer any good at the Dictionary. You can assure him that I have lost my quickness, my wonderful scholarship and all my learned instincts, and that I no longer know a Greek root from an English artichoke."

"It would be an incorrect description of you," said Mr. Gulliver.

"It would be a lie," said Mr. Hetherly. "Pardon me for altering your word, Mr. Gulliver."

"But I know, from outside sources that people have to tell lies sometimes," remarked Mr. Winter slyly. "And this would seem to be a case in point."

They looked at each other in silent consultation, and then smiled as if a pleasant decision

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had been taken. Geraldine caught the expression on their faces, and laughed her thanks.

"I knew you would help me," she said. "And remember you must complain of me unmercifully. You must say that I am hopelessly inaccurate, that I am worse than useless, that I'm a positive nuisance, that I find all the wrong quotations, and mix up all the spellings and that I drive all your ideas away—"

"But that would not be a lie," interrupted Mr. Gulliver. "You do indeed drive our ideas away. We did not do a stroke of honest work all the morning because you were coming."

"And you shall not do a stroke this afternoon because I have come," Geraldine said. "Let us all go out together and have some fishing. Let us forget about dictionaries and professions and amuse ourselves. The air will do you good. You don't look as if you'd had any for ages."

"The stream is very low. I daresay you noticed that as you came along," said Mr. Hetherly.

"Never mind," said Mr. Winter, "we can try fishing up stream with worms."

"I'll get the bait and tackle," said Mr. Hetherly. "Two rods will be enough."

"We'd better take flies with us," said

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Geraldine; "we may have to fish down stream after all. Besides, I'm always more lucky with flies. Where are the fishing-books?"

"I'll fetch them," said Mr. Winter, and he hurried off after Mr. Hetherly.

"Be sure and bring March Browns and Black Spiders!" she called out.

"I have some here," said Mr. Gulliver, who had been searching in his drawer. "I laid in a good stock the other day against your return."

"How kind of you," she said. "Well, let us be off before Father comes. I'm longing to try my luck again. I suppose the creels are in their old place?"

"Mr. Winter will bring them," Mr. Gulliver answered, still fumbling or pretending to fumble over his fishing-book. "He has been furbishing them up lately—also against your return."

"I certainly do stir you all up, don't I?" she said in her bright way.

"Yes, indeed you do," he replied eagerly. "You put life into us at once. Everything changes when you are here."

"For the better or worse, I wonder?" she asked, teasing him.

"Do you know," he continued, "directly I hear your voice, I look back on my life and be-

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gin to wish that—that there were no such things as words, or least that I had never had dealings with them professionally. They deaden one, or rather, people think they deaden one. And it comes to the same in the end.”

Geraldine stood looking at him, puzzled for the moment. Mr. Gulliver had never before spoken to her in this manner.

“I don’t think I follow you,” she said slowly.

“No, Miss Geraldine,” he answered, gathering himself together; “I don’t suppose you do.”

Then suddenly she understood, and many of his acts of quiet devotion took on a new significance. She had laughed at him and laughed at him. But she did not laugh now. Something in the wistful expression of his face, in the patient tone of his voice, arrested her youthfulness.

“Come along fishing,” she said kindly, “and don’t for goodness sake look back on your life and torment yourself with regretful reflections.”

“No, it is foolish of me, isn’t it?” he said smiling.

“Of course it is,” she answered, encouraged

GERALDINE OPENS THE WINDOWS

by his compliance. "You choose words, Mr. Gulliver, and you've become a word-monger. But you might have been something much worse: a wealthy iron-monger or even a fish-monger. How I should have hated you then!"

"I must own I can't imagine myself given up to iron or fish," he said quaintly.

"No, of course, you can't," she said, laughing now. "Oh, don't be discontented, Mr. Gulliver. Why, you're part of the Dictionary, the dear, silly, ridiculous old Dictionary, which I don't approve of in the very least, but love to the bottom of my heart."

"And you think I ought to remain content to be part of the Dictionary?" he asked, smiling a little sadly.

"Why, yes," she answered. "You've always been that, haven't you?"

"Yes," he replied, "always. Oh, I know I am just a 'harmless drudge'—to quote Johnson—a fossilised book-worm, fossilised before my time—but when you come home I begin—"

He broke off, and opened the door for her.

"The others are waiting for us in the garden," he said, in his usual way.

She turned to him impulsively, meaning to

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speak some thought which had risen up in her mind. But she changed her intention.

“Give me my hat, Mr. Gulliver,” she said. “It wouldn’t do for me to get sunstroke, would it? My brain wouldn’t stand it according to the account you are going to give Father of my impaired mental condition.”



CHAPTER THREE

CHAPTER III

THE WIND BLOWETH WHERE IT LISTETH

MEANWHILE Geraldine's father and his old friend Professor Durham, who had both been attending an international meeting of savants in the North, were driving home to the Yew House from a station on another line, which was also distant about twelve miles from the headquarters of the Dictionary. Professor Grant had owned the Yew House for eighteen years. He had come into some property at that time, and hearing that this old-world place was to be sold for a moderate sum, he went to see it, and decided to settle down there for the rest of his life. The isolated situation appealed specially to him. He had passed through great troubles, and he felt that he would find and retain in these surroundings that serenity of mind essential to a scholar's aims. So the Yew House, with its fine yew hedge many centuries old, its pleasance, and fish-ponds, became a quiet seat of learning, where the book-worms worked year after year, and grave scholars stayed for

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recuperation, all taking their share of comradeship with the little girl who had no one but themselves to play with. But they had played royally with her, Daddy Durham being the jewel of them all. He was thinking of her now as he drove along with her father. She did not know that he was intending to spend his whole summer holiday at the Yew House. That was to be a surprise. He glanced at two or three of the streams to see what chance of fishing there was for her. He looked at the moors, and was glad that the heather would soon be coming on for her. She would not find the country so fearfully burnt up after all, considering the long drought. He wondered whether she was home already. Her father had forgotten which day she was returning. Daddy Durham reflected that it was exactly like Professor Grant not to remember the date of his daughter's return, but to be almost excited at the prospect of an interview with a new secretary, whom he was expecting that same afternoon.

"I am greatly looking forward to seeing this clever young fellow from Balliol, Durham," he said. "I am so glad you are with me. You will be able to help me to decide."

"No one can tell a good scholar better than you can, Grant," said Professor Durham. "I

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am quite sure that if you think the Balliol man is the right man for the Dictionary, he is the right man. You have remarkable discrimination."

"Well, I must say I have never regretted my choice of my permanent staff," said Professor Grant, with a grave smile. "If anything, they are too engrossed in their work. For I can never persuade them to go away during holiday-time. No, they prefer to remain at home and continue at their task. But with all their enthusiasm and unflagging diligence, we are not getting on quickly enough. We shall certainly be obliged to increase our staff. You see the outside contributions are becoming almost unmanageable, and yet they all have to be carefully sorted, lest we should lose some valuable item. I think Mr. Gulliver reckons that we have something like eleven hundred voluntary helpers in all parts of the kingdom. You can understand that the sifting alone of this mass of material is a separate department in itself. We really need several new sub-editors. But I can't see my way to that, unfortunately. No, if I can secure this young man's services, I must be content for the present. And then there is Geraldine, of course."

"But are you sure she intends to choose the

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Dictionary for her profession?" asked Daddy Durham. "She may have some other scheme for herself."

"I must deal with that question," said Professor Grant coldly; and without any further reference to Geraldine he began speaking of the meeting which they had been attending, and the admirable address of the President, who was a Frenchman. But as they were approaching the Yew House, Professor Grant returned to the subject of the new secretary, his qualifications, his testimonials, his brilliant successes at the University, and his personal character. His mind seemed entirely taken up with this one thought. When Davy came out to receive him, he at once asked whether a gentleman had arrived, and was disappointed when the coast-guard'sman answered in the negative.

"But," he added, "Miss Geraldine has come."

"Oh," said her father, indifferently. "You must show that gentleman in immediately he comes, Davy. I'll see him in the library."

Davy was stricken with remorse that he had not had the sense to tidy up the room. But it was too late now. Professor Grant hurried to the library, followed by Professor Durham, and Davy accompanied them, hoping vaguely that

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things were not so bad as his anxiety suggested. They entered the room, and all stood looking at its disordered appearance: at the tea-tray, the cushions thrown on the floor, the cigarettes strewn about, the three book-worms' three empty desks, the volume A.C.Z. left carelessly in the waste-paper basket, the reference books on the reference-table huddled together anyhow—the 1623 Shakespeare, the Cotgrave, Coverdale's Bible, the French manual written to teach French to the sister of Henry the Seventh, Johnson's Dictionary, and Wycliffe's Bible pushed into a heart-breaking heap to make room for Geraldine's fan and gloves, feather-boas and scent-bottle.

Davy's master turned to him for an explanation.

"Where is Miss Geraldine? Where are the secretaries?" he asked severely.

Davy tried to suppress a grin which had been summoned to his face by a furtive glance of sympathy from little Daddy Durham.

"Miss Geraldine left the message, sir, that they had all gone fishing," he answered, and then immediately busied himself with gathering the cups together, collecting the scattered cigarettes, and making some attempt at tidying up.

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"Who opened the windows in this unnecessary fashion?" asked Professor Grant frigidly.

"Miss Geraldine felt the air stuffy, sir," said Davy. "It has been a hot day, sir."

"Shut them at once," said the Professor. "And then go."

Davy obeyed orders, and after exchanging another secret sign of geniality with Professor Durham, fled only too gladly, giving the news in the kitchen that the master had come home, and that they would have to look out for a bit of 'dirty weather,' and that Miss Geraldine would have but a poor welcome when she returned from fishing.

Meanwhile the two friends left alone in the library, were silent for some protracted period. Professor Durham took out a long pipe, lit it, and tried to appear as grave and shocked as the situation seemed to demand; but all his attempts ended in an indulgent smile in the direction of the three empty desks, and a glance of tenderness at Geraldine's frivolous little hand-satchel lying at the foot of the tea-table. He stooped and picked it up with great care. He was a human-looking, little, old man, with a face as sweet and round as a child's, and kindly eyes reflecting the gentle spirit within; whilst Professor Grant had the features and the

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appearance of an impersonal scholar whose emotions had been long since dead. Handsome and well-favoured though he was, anyone would have looked at him and been sure at the first glance that there was nothing to appeal to in his cold nature. People had always wondered at the friendship which existed between these two men; and indeed the explanation of it lay, not in their common enthusiasm for learning, but in something far stronger, far deeper, their common love for a woman whom they had both lost, each in his own way. Geraldine's mother had been their bond in the past; and their memory of her remained their bond. Geraldine herself strengthened it as the years went on. The gentle understanding which her father's nature was unable to give her, she received from Daddy Durham, and loved him dearly in return. Her father was undoubtedly attached to her; but he had always judged her and found her wanting. Daddy Durham had always loved her and defended her. But the difference of their methods with her had never interfered with their friendship, which was for all time.

"You see the sort of behaviour that vexes me in Geraldine," Professor Grant said. "It is most disappointing that she should be so frivolous after all my careful training. Take this

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one incident only: she comes down, turns the library into a tea-room, opens the windows, never giving one thought to the valuable books, disturbs the work, and takes my secretaries off fishing, forcing them no doubt to go, just to gratify her impulse. And the result is, one whole valuable afternoon lost for the sake of a moment's whim. The truth is, Durham, she has grown up like her mother."

Professor Durham took his pipe from his mouth, and held it in the air.

"Yes," he said gently, and his voice came as from a distance of time and space.

"I have done everything in my power to make her an enthusiastic student, entirely devoted to learning," continued Professor Grant after a pause.

"Yes, indeed you have," said Professor Durham nodding his head and putting his pipe back in his mouth.

"I have given her scholars as companions, playmates, friends," went on Geraldine's father. "I have carefully kept her from her own frivolous sex with its frivolous influences. I have forgotten no detail in my scheme. No gossiping women servants have been allowed to invade our home, and no idle women visitors have been permitted to waste our time. I have thought

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of everything, Durham, and yet I have failed with her. Oh, I do not say that she is not clever. But her outlook is not the scholar's outlook. She is a failure."

"She is not a failure," said Daddy Durham warmly. "She is a success, and you do her a wrong by thinking otherwise. She has a generous impulsive nature; her waywardness is only youthfulness. You cannot expect that at her age she should be everlastingly serious. And you ought not to wish it. Time will make her serious, only too surely."

But Professor Grant did not heed him.

"In spite of classics and mathematics and mental and moral science, Durham," he said; "in spite of the personal example of eminent philosophers, and the scholastic atmosphere of the Dictionary, Geraldine has grown more and more like her mother. I have seen with bitter regret that environment has had no influence on her inherited temperament. Every year she has grown more and more like her mother."

"Yes," said Professor Durham dreamily, "in voice, in manner, in appearance, in character, and I hope she will prove to have her mother's noble heart."

His friend turned to him abruptly and with some irritation.

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"It is amazing how you always admired her mother," he said, "always spoke up for her, always believed in her, always pleaded for her."

"Who would not have pleaded for her?" replied Daddy Durham. "She was so young, so gay, so impulsive. She had that rare possession, a heart of gold. I wanted you to leave the door of your house, the door of your affections open. She would have come back. You would never have regretted your generous action."

"It was not possible to my nature," said Professor Grant sternly, "nor to my code."

"Alas, these codes," said Professor Durham. "They may help us, but they also wreck us."

"It was her code of dishonour that wrecked me," answered Grant. "The day when she went away with her lover, deserting even her baby-girl, the fabric of my heart went to ruin. If it had not been for your faithful friendship and the absorbing nature of my work, I do not know how I could have gone on with my life."

"I was able to help you very little, Grant," Professor Durham said. "You would not listen to me. When I spoke of a second chance for a woman, you thought I was out of my senses. And yet you owed her mercy, even though her fault was doubly great: being the unfaithful-

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ness of a mother as well as that of a wife. But from the beginning, when you found her more light-hearted than you expected, more irresponsible, more frivolous, you closed and barred your heart's citadel. You did not take into account the great difference between your ages. She was young for twenty. You were old for forty-five. You did not try to bridge over the space. A woman like Geraldine's mother needed to be loved passionately, generously, without stint or measure: with a lover's worship, not with a scholar's reserve. If you could have loved her more, you could have kept her by your side. I've always said that to you, and I've never altered in my belief during these twenty years."

Professor Grant rose and went over to the window, where he stood silently looking out into the garden. Then he turned to his friend.

"I have said that to myself sometimes," he murmured, "when in spite of stern forbidding, my thoughts have dwelt on that sad time. You must not think that I haven't passed through bitter hours of remorse and regret. I remember now that woeful day when the divorce was granted and I was free. I would have given worlds to have undone what I had done. I would—"

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He broke off, and waved his hand, in dismissal of a painful subject; and taking up a piece of manuscript from Mr. Gulliver's desk, he looked at it absent-mindedly, and smiled with the scholar's grave pleasure.

"Yes," he said, "it would have gone badly with me if I had not been an enthusiast for learning. The impersonality of comparative philology has been a mighty resource and comfort to me. Where other people in their troubles and perplexities have turned to Nature, that tender nurse and healer, I have found absorbing pleasure in studying the history and the romance of words, their changes of meaning, yes, and their vicissitudes of social condition and circumstance. The wonderful attempts of human beings to express themselves, the extraordinary resemblances and differentiations of languages and nations; the curious linguistic family affinities; the persistence too, despite change of climate and condition, of certain words which connect widely-scattered peoples with each other, and lead us onwards and backwards to most astonishing historical discoveries: these subjects, and such as these leave no room in one's mind for the personal note."

"No, you are right," said Professor Durham, smiling gently, "there is no room for the

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personal note in comparative philology. It dies down."

Professor Grant glanced at him with some uneasiness.

"It had to die down," he said, half-excusing himself. "It was otherwise impossible for me to have passed on. And by no other means could I have been successful in banishing Geraldine's mother from my memory. With regard to Geraldine herself, I have tried to do my best for her in accordance with my own views. You have always considered my methods to be over harsh. But you have never fully realised that I have been possessed by one leading idea in her education: to protect her from herself and her inheritance."

He paused, and a gentler expression came over his face.

"If she has had my hardness to bear, Durham," he added, "she has at least had your tenderness to sustain her. Sometimes I think she has not after all missed a woman's loving care, because of your never-failing kindness through these twenty years."

"I loved her first for her mother's sake, then for herself," Daddy Durham said, "and then for both their sakes. They have been interwoven in my life."

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"You have been a generous friend," Professor Grant went on. "You have never borne me any grudge for taking Geraldine's mother from you."

"The wind bloweth where it listeth," the other answered, and the two men relapsed into silence, which Professor Durham at last broke.

"Geraldine is grown up, Grant," he said, "and some day soon, you will be obliged to tell her the whole truth about her mother. You will have to tell her that her mother is not dead but that—"

"She shall never hear it from me," Grant interrupted roughly.

"But one day they'll meet," Durham urged. "Nature wills it so—one day they'll come together—and what then? Don't you see for yourself that—"

It was useless to continue, for Professor Grant had waved his hand again in imperious dismissal of a subject which was evidently too harassing for his mind, and, in self-protection, had snatched up from one of the book-worms' desks another piece of manuscript which at once engaged his whole attention. Professor Durham shrugged his shoulders a little dejectedly, but understood his friend too well to expect any

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further personal talk. He rescued the volume A.C.Z. from the waste-paper basket and restored it to its place in the oak bookcases, and re-arranged the books of reference, whilst Professor Grant went on reading and making his comments aloud.

"Yes, yes, this is a very interesting piece of work," he said; "perhaps a little involved there—no, I think not—it explains itself—I see he has adopted my suggestion here—there is no doubt that was the expression used and retained to this day in the Northumbrian dialect—yes—an admirable piece of work—Mr. Hetherly's I see—an excellent scholar—almost as good as Mr. Gulliver—but we are not getting on quickly enough—I shall have to insist on Geraldine adopting the Dictionary as her profession—she would be invaluable if she would cultivate diligence. We must press on. Of course there is the new secretary coming. If not this one, another one. But we really need three more secretaries and Geraldine: a staff of seven. Perhaps then, with all the outside helpers and contributors we might—"

At that moment Davy entered bringing a card. He looked a little puzzled.

"A gentleman to see you, sir," he said.

"Ah, the new secretary," said Professor

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Grant, putting down the manuscript and turning eagerly to Daddy Durham.

"He doesn't look like the new secretary, sir," ventured Davy. "He—he's rather a smart sort of gentleman, sir, not our sort."

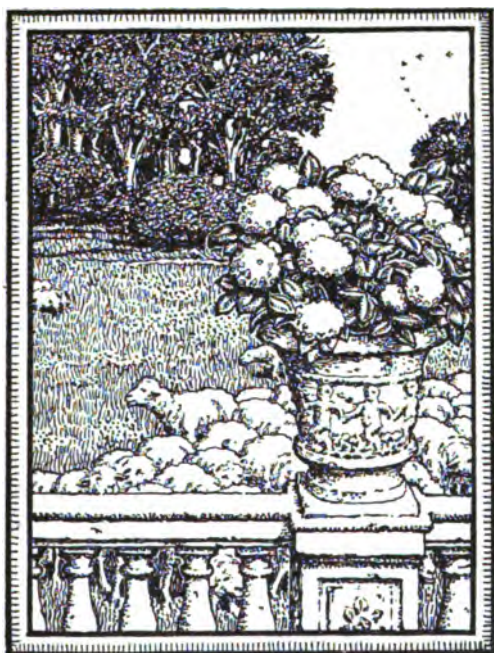
"I do not seem to recognise the name," said Professor Grant, examining the card. "But I daresay it is all right, Davy. Show him in. Perhaps that was his name: Harold Warwick. You'll stay, Durham, won't you?"

"I'll come in afterwards," said Daddy Durham, opening one of the garden windows. "I'll take a stroll on the bowling-green first, and have a look at the old hedge."

He disappeared, and Davy who had darted off to fetch the visitor, now returned with him and ushered him into the library with great ceremony. He then sought out Professor Durham on the bowling-green.

"Lord love us, sir," he said, "what a handsome young gentleman! He's no book-worm, sir. Not he. I'll send Christian to fetch Miss Geraldine back from the fishing. She'd like to see him. That's the sort of craft for her, isn't it?"

A twinkle came into Daddy Durham's eye. "I believe it is, Davy!" he laughed.



CHAPTER FOUR

CHAPTER IV

THE STRANGER FROM THE BUSH

HAROLD WARWICK was certainly a different species of human being from that which had of recent years set foot in the Yew House. Davy was right. There was nothing of the book-worm about his appearance: he looked a fine, strong huntsman of manly beauty and spirited hardihood: boyish, withal, and gifted with laughing blue eyes.

Professor Grant received him with some attempt at warmth of welcome, and signed to him to be seated.

"I am very glad you were able to come this afternoon, Mr. Warwick," he said. "I have been looking forward to your arrival, and should have been greatly disappointed if you had been unable to visit me; for it is most important that I should make my arrangements as soon as possible. Unhappily, there has already been considerable delay, and I desire to press on now at full speed with the Dictionary."

Harold Warwick looked startled.

"The dictionary?" he said. "I fear—"

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"The other secretaries, three in number," went on Professor Grant unheedingly, "are—are—unfortunately occupied in another direction at present; but I expect them in at any moment; and meantime I can myself unfold to you the exact nature of the work, so that you may be able to judge whether it is likely to suit your brilliant capabilities."

"My capabilities?" put in the visitor becoming more and more mystified.

"Yes," continued Professor Grant with marked approval. "I perceive that you are modest, but the truth is that I have been delighted by your admirable testimonials and by the exhilarating account of your enthusiasm for learning. That in itself is a strong recommendation, and one too rare, alas."

"I am afraid there is some mistake, sir," said Warwick, half amused and half alarmed at the idea of bearing the burden of some one else's learning. "I am very sorry; but I am evidently not the person you take me to be. Perhaps you are expecting some other visitor."

"I am expecting a new secretary," said Professor Grant at once, looking bewildered. And he added with characteristic coldness: "If you are not he, pray who are you? Be good enough to tell me briefly. My time is valuable."

THE STRANGER FROM THE BUSH

"My name is Warwick, Harold Warwick, sir," the young man answered. "I am an Englishman from the Bush, charged with a message to you from an old friend of yours who died out there recently, at Murrengunna, a station out on the back blocks."

"Impossible," said the Professor shortly, always annoyed at having to deal with matters outside his chosen range. "I know nothing about the back blocks. I know no one in the Bush. I have never known anyone in the Colonies. My interest and attention have been entirely confined to England."

He rose, desiring to show that this unnecessary interview was over. But the stranger from the Bush was not to be dismissed unheard. The Professor's manner did not awe him. He had come many miles to deliver a message and he intended to deliver it. So instead of taking his leave, he leaned back in his chair and looked the picture of good-nature and easy patience. And oddly enough, Professor Grant sat down again.

"I think, sir," said Warwick, "if you will put your mind back to the past, you used to know a man called James Howard."

"James Howard, James Howard," repeated Grant absentmindedly. "No—no."

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"You knew him at school," went on Warwick, "and then at college. He disgraced himself later on, was cast out, sent away by his friends, got rid of—"

The Professor touched the young man on the arm.

"James Howard, James Howard," he said in a low voice. "I remember him well. I had a great regard for him. A brilliant man of exceptional parts, but—"

He seemed lost in thought, and Warwick paused a moment before continuing.

"I nursed him in his last illness, Professor," he said. "He knew I was coming to England shortly, for my spell, and he made me promise that I would t.y and find you."

"James Howard," repeated Grant half to himself, "poor old James Howard."

"He left a legacy to you," went on Warwick gently, seeing that the Professor was being held in the web of memory. "He begged me to see you myself, and give you his last greeting. He had not many papers and things belonging to his past life, but fortunately he had kept your lawyer's address. He said you had told him never to lose that, in case he might want you to help him. So I have been able to find you in spite of your change of name. He did not know

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that you had changed your name many years ago. He spoke of you always as Cliveden."

The Professor looked up.

"He knew me before I came into some property which involved my change of name," he said, still half dreamily, and then he signed to his visitor to continue.

Warwick drew his chair a little nearer and leaned forward:

"He wanted me to tell you above all things that he was grateful to the end," he said reverently. "I was to tell you that the years had come and gone: gone and come. Those were his words. But that he had never forgotten how in the bitter hour of his disgrace, when all other doors were shut against him, yours were opened wide for him. He said out of the whole world two people only were kind to him—you and your beautiful young wife. He drew the picture for me. I see it now: the stricken man with bowed head coming into a haven: kindly hands held out to him: generous hearts encouraging him: no criticism, no judgment: only sympathy. Yes, he who had always been so silent, told me this story many times during his illness. And as he lay dying, his last words were your young wife's words of encouragement to him: '*Be of good cheer. A new life over the*

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seas, and fresh courage. All is not lost.' I shall never forget it. Out in those lonely places, you know, tragedies have their added meaning."

At that moment he glanced towards the Professor, who was sitting immovable as a statue. The young man realised suddenly that it was useless to go on with his story. He could have told many brave and splendid things about old James Howard; but this iceberg of a human being would not have cared to listen. He waited for a few minutes hoping that the Professor would wish to hear more; but as no sign of interest or encouragement was given, he rose and took up his hat.

"There is nothing further to say, Professor Grant," he said. "The papers are with the lawyers, and here are duplicates of them. You will see that James Howard had £3,000 to leave, and he left £1,000 to you, and £2,000 to your wife."

"My wife," repeated the Professor in a lifeless voice. There was a pause which seemed endless to Warwick, and at last Professor Grant stretched out his hand mechanically for the papers. Harold Warwick delivered them up with a sort of reverent reluctance; for his mind was full of the old dying squatter, who had

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treasured the memory of this cold-hearted scholar's friendship and sent his all as greeting and good-bye, never dreaming of such impossibilities as forgetfulness and indifference. The young man, who had been greatly attached to James Howard, felt both sad and indignant. Some words of remonstrance rose to his lips, but he checked them and was hurrying away from that depressing atmosphere, when suddenly a merry laugh was heard outside in the garden, and a voice cried:

"Daddy Durham, how perfectly lovely to find you here, you dear old thing! I thought you were going to Switzerland. What a splendid surprise! And so the new secretary has come! Is he likely to be suitable? Is he handsome, or is he, like the rest of us, booky, not to say book-wormy? Oh, he's in the library with Father, is he? I hope he has not heard. I'll go and take a look at him!"

The stranger from the Bush recovered his spirits instantly, and congratulated himself that he was still in that dull library and had the chance of seeing the owner of that gay young voice. He turned in eager expectancy towards the garden-window, and greeted Geraldine with a ready smile as she came into the library armed with her rod and creel. She gave him a friendly

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little inclination of her pretty head, and went up to her father who received her in his usual frigid fashion. But this did not astonish her. She accepted his cold greeting quite cheerfully and said:

"How do you do, Father. I hope you are feeling well. I hope you are not very vexed about the book-worms. We had not fished together for such a long time. I really could not resist taking them out and giving them some air. We've fished down stream with Black Spiders and caught twenty trout. Not bad, is it? I'm so glad I have not lost my skill and my luck."

She did not appear to suffer over his want of interest in her, for when he merely nodded his head gravely and moved away to the further end of the library, she turned to Warwick and said smiling:

"And I suppose you are the new secretary. I hope you, too, like fishing!"

He laughed and answered:

"Oh, yes, I like fishing tremendously, under favourable conditions, you know!"

"Well, sometimes I come as a tornado," she continued, a merry twinkle in her eye, "and I sweep all the book-worms out of the library for a little fresh air and recreation. The Diction-

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ary remains dormant all the afternoon. Valuable time is lost. But not really lost: for we return and work away as fast as motor-cars, oblivious of everyone and everything. There now! That is the prospect in front of you! How do you like it?"

"I like it so much that I am wishing for the first time in my life that I was a book-worm," Harold Warwick said. "Unfortunately I am not the new secretary."

"Then," she exclaimed gaily, "who on earth are you?"

"Alas, I am only a stranger from Australia," he replied shaking his head in pretended depreciation of himself and his circumstances.

"From Australia," she repeated. "From that great, big, far-off world! How splendid!"

"I come from the Bush," he went on, delighted by her eager interest, "from a place called Murrengunna, a cattle-station out on the back blocks, you know."

"Then you're a real squatter?" she said, with marked approval.

"Yes," he answered smiling, "that is to say I'm on the track towards one."

"Upon my word, I didn't know my father had such an interesting acquaintance," she said.

"Oh, I'm quite a stranger to him," Warwick

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said. "But I am over here for my spell, and I came to bring news of a legacy left by an old friend of his out there to him and——"

"A legacy!" Geraldine interrupted. "How delightful! I hope it's a big one! Why, Father, you'll be able to have several new secretaries, and I shall not be obliged to lead the scholar's life. How perfectly glorious! Daddy Durham, listen to the good news, a legacy to Father, and he'll be able to have shoals of new secretaries, and I shan't be obliged to lead the scholar's life."

Professor Durham, who had that moment come into the library, turned first to Professor Grant and then to the stranger for an explanation of this unexpected piece of intelligence.

"Yes, sir," said Harold Warwick to Durham, "it has fallen to my lot to bring news of a legacy to this young lady's father and mother."

"Her mother," said Daddy Durham in an awed tone of voice.

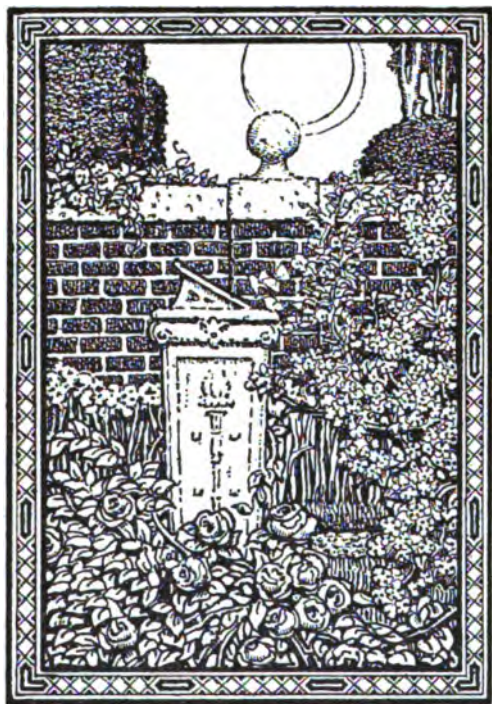
"My mother!" exclaimed Geraldine, her face suddenly grave and her manner serious. "Father, speak to me—what is he saying? Daddy Durham, you speak—what does he mean? My mother is dead. She died twenty years ago."

There was a moment of painful silence, one

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of those lengthened moments which teach us the futility of measuring time. Harold Warwick stood ill at ease, conscious that he had brought about a painful situation. Daddy Durham stared intently at the carpet. Professor Grant stared straight in front of him seeing no one. And at last he spoke:

“Yes, twenty years ago,” he said in a cold, clear voice.



CHAPTER FIVE

CHAPTER V

UNWONTED EFFECTS OF A LEGACY

AFTER Harold Warwick had gone, Professor Grant retired to his own study and then to his bedroom, refusing to hold converse with anyone. Daddy Durham, who looked harassed, knocked several times at the door and received the answer that no one could be admitted.

"Is there nothing I can do for you, Grant?" Daddy Durham asked anxiously.

"Nothing," said the Professor's stern voice.

Daddy Durham lingered on the landing for a little while, and went disconsolately downstairs to the library, where he was joined by Geraldine, who had herself had no better luck. She had fumbled at the door-handle and called 'Father' in her kindest manner. Her father had answered:

"Be good enough to go away. Be good enough to leave me in peace."

She had come with a most dejected air into the library, and had taken Daddy Durham off for a stroll in the plantation, leaving the book-worms in a state of considerable depression; for

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they were always affected by the Professor's moods, and always perturbed when Geraldine was out of spirits.

"I confess I never understood from outside sources that the news of a legacy could have this strange effect on any human beings," remarked Mr. Winter. "I have ever believed that a piece of intelligence of this nature might be distinctly stimulating."

"But we do not yet know the circumstances attendant on the legacy," said Mr. Hetherly. "Miss Geraldine has merely told us that her father has had news of a legacy. That in itself sounds pleasant. But there may be some unpleasant complication. That is life, you know. Nothing is simple."

"The young man himself may have caused the Professor some annoyance," said Mr. Gulliver. "To begin with, it was irritating enough that he was not the person whom the Professor was expecting. And probably he gave the news in a tactless fashion. I was not impressed with his appearance or his bearing. I hear he is a young squatter out in the Bush."

"I wish he had stayed there," said Mr. Hetherly, closing his eyes. "He is a dangerous person to our community."

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"And why?" asked Mr. Gulliver a little anxiously.

"Because he is not a scholar," replied Mr. Hetherly, his eyes still closed. "Because he is a new type to us and to—to Miss Geraldine."

"I don't understand," said Mr. Winter. "She could not be interested in anyone of that description. I've heard of squatters from outside sources. They are rough, ignorant sort of creatures."

"He has probably gone away already and the episode is over," said Mr. Gulliver, rather defiantly.

"Well, let us trust it is over," remarked Mr. Hetherly.

His words added to the pervading gloom, and the book-worms took no pleasure that evening in their usual recreations. Mr. Gulliver suffered the most of all. He was writing the life of Peter the Great from an entirely new point of view, and instead of thinking about his favourite hero who hitherto had never failed to inspire him with enthusiastic interest, he found his thoughts were strangely taken up with the unusual subject of squatters. So he left his work and wandered off like a lost soul to the woods, where he met Mr. Hetherly and Mr. Winter, also wandering about like lost souls,

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but at the moment of his arrival a little cheered by the discovery of a particular kind of moth, in search of which they had spent many vain hours on other occasions.

But this depression of spirit which had taken possession of what Davy called 'the upper deck,' had not penetrated to the kitchen. Christian and Tom were greatly interested to hear about the young stranger from the outside world, and the coast-guardsmen, bending over his task of darning Geraldine's stockings, described with much eloquence the handsome appearance and dashing manner of the unknown visitor.

"I knew at once he wasn't a scholar when I let him in," he said. "It gave me a pleasant start to see that sort of gentleman again. Scholars are all very well, and you get used to them, but there's no denying they're mighty slow. This young fellow will wake us up. Miss Geraldine will do a nice bit of flirting with him, and Mr. Gulliver, Mr. Hetherly and Mr. Winter will all be jealous. We're in for some fun!"

"But the young man will go back to his native country," suggested Christian.

"Nonsense," answered Davy. "He won't go back to his native country any more than you've gone. It isn't likely he'd go away now he's set eyes on Miss Geraldine. He'd be a fool,

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and he's not a fool. He asked me if there was a inn anywhere near, as he didn't want to drive all the way back to Milchester this evening. So I sent him to the Running Stream, and you see he'll bide there and we're in for some fun. Lord, what holes she makes in her heels! She'll have to buy some new stockings and no mistake! Here, Tom, you lend a hand. Any man blind of both eyes could see to mend that hole."

At that moment the library bell rang, and Davy put down his darning, and dashed off in his usual fashion. He returned with a letter in his hand.

"Here begins the fun," he said. "Professor Durham asked me whether the young man had driven back to Milchester, and I told him I shouldn't wonder if he was bidding at the Running Stream. So I'm to go and see. Miss Geraldine looks a bit excited but pale. The Professor isn't like himself. And the Master has shut himself up in his bedroom. Things aren't over cheerful on the upper deck."

Davy was right. Geraldine looked pale, and Daddy Durham was not himself at all. Geraldine, deeply moved by the mention of her mother's name, and distressed by her father's unreachableness, had taken little old Daddy into the plantation and plied him with harassing ques-

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tions to which he dared only give evasive answers. Many a time he had reproached himself for deceiving her about her mother, and this evening he would fain have opened his heart, and told her some of the things he knew, some of the things she had the right to know. But all these years he had never let her suspect that he had even been acquainted with her mother.

"I found you a motherless little babe, and instantly took charge of you, needing in my loneliness something to love and cherish," he always said to her in his tender way.

And this evening he used the same words with their half-truth, and shrugged his shoulders gently when Geraldine spoke of the legacy, and of the surprising fact that the man who left the money did not know that her mother had died twenty years ago.

"Cannot you tell me anything, Daddy?" she asked impatiently. "Don't you see for yourself that it's a most curious story? Can't you throw any light on it?"

He shook his head.

"No one leaves money to a dead person," she persisted. "So he must have believed her to be alive. But surely he must have had some means of getting to know, Daddy. It seems

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incredible that he shouldn't have heard in some way or other. Don't you think so?"

"My dear, what can I say?" he answered. "I don't know any more than you do about the circumstances of this mysterious legacy. I only came in at the last moment of the interview. And until your father consents to see us, we have to remain in ignorance."

"Yes, and when he does see me, he will tell me nothing," she said a little bitterly. "That's my usual fate with him. And asking him anything is like asking a block of granite."

"Hush, hush, dear," he said, shaking his head.

"But you know it's true, Daddy," she returned, "though you make pretences. But, as Mr. Hetherly would say: 'Human nature always makes pretences'!"

They smiled at the recollection of Mr. Hetherly's well-known wisdom, and for a few moments walked silently in the direction of the picturesque old fish-ponds. Then Geraldine said impetuously:

"If only we had not allowed the young man to go off when Father advanced and dismissed him. I shall not forget in a hurry how he rose up, thanked the young fellow frigidly, and showed him to the door. Mr. Warwick might

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have been a criminal. Now, Daddy, you can't in your wildest fit of loyalty pretend that Father did not behave like an alligator."

"I must own it was an unpleasant moment," Daddy Durham said, sighing with relief that they had got on to safer ground. "And the young man behaved with admirable self-control."

"Yes, I thought so," Geraldine said eagerly.

"A winning young fellow, and good-looking, too," continued Professor Durham, who was quite willing to talk for hours on the subject of the stranger from the Bush, provided that it turned Geraldine from thoughts of her mother. So he praised his appearance and his forbearance, and confessed that he had been much attracted by his bright personality. He laughed a little at the idea of a man of that description being taken for a scholar.

"No," he said, "Davy was right. There's not much of the scholar about him! But it is refreshing to see anyone so entirely different from our own selves. A welcome change for you, too, my dear. I often think your young heart must grow weary of returning always to the companionship of your fossil-friends. For we are fossils. There is no doubt about that."

"Faithful fossils," laughed Geraldine,

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"whom I would not wish altered in any single detail. Nevertheless I was pleased to see this non-fossilised specimen! I should like to see him again."

"So you shall," said Daddy recklessly.

"But he has gone his way," said Geraldine. "He had not much inducement to linger in these parts."

"He has only gone as far as the Running Stream," Daddy answered. "He asked Davy for the name of the nearest inn."

Geraldine flushed with pleasure.

"Then I'll write and invite him to call in to-morrow," she said gaily. "I certainly think we owe him some attention after Father's rudeness, don't you? You see I could tell him that I wished to ask him several important questions about the legacy. And that's true enough. It is only natural that I should want to know the facts. For it is most extraordinary that—"

She paused, arrested again by the thought of her mother, and Professor Durham, conscious once more of rocks ahead in the shape of harassing questions, broke in hastily:

"Of course, of course, my dear. Write at once. And we will get Davy to take the letter at once."

"You're an old brick," she said, marching

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him off into the library. "You always encourage me to do what I want."

"I cannot stand being cross-examined any further about her mother and that wretched legacy," thought Daddy Durham a little guiltily. "My nerves go all to bits when she begins. Rather let her write to twenty handsome young men from the Bush."

But when Davy returned with a letter from Harold Warwick stating that he would be delighted to come up the next morning and tell Miss Grant anything she wished to know, Daddy Durham was inclined to think that he had been a trifle rash in giving his sanction and encouragement to Geraldine's impetuosity. He retired to his room feeling slightly apprehensive, and somewhat in disgrace with himself. His strongest feeling, however, was that of the usual criminal, the hope that he would not be found out: and in this hope he fell asleep, with a gentle smile on his face, the smile also of the usual criminal.

But Geraldine not being a criminal, did not get off to sleep in that irresponsible fashion. Her thoughts that night were in a hopeless entanglement of gravity and gaiety. At one moment she was puzzling over the mystery of the legacy, and asking herself a hundred ques-

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tions about her father and her dead mother, and her own curious bringing-up based on her father's theories: questions which, of course, had often pressed themselves on her mind, but which had usually been put to flight by youth's unconscious acceptance of existing facts. At the next moment she had forgotten about such serious matters and was frankly looking forward to the fun of seeing this handsome young man from the outside world. She had spent considerable time gazing at his handwriting, and decided that it had far more character in it and was much more attractive than a scholar's mean-spirited scrawl. It was bold and dashing, and reminded her of a high-spirited horse galloping at free will over the plains or prairies. Not that she knew much about that sort of thing; but the Bush and the very idea of a cattle-station, and the young man himself conjured up new pictures for her which set her imagination free and roused her interest. She remembered vaguely that there was a book about Australia on one of the top shelves in the oak-panelled library. She would look at it in the morning. No, she would look at it that very moment. So she put on her dressing-gown, stole downstairs into the library, and depositing the candlestick on Mr. Gulliver's desk, lighted a taper and

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climbed the ladder. After a lengthened search, she found Leichhardt's "Journal of an Overland Expedition in Australia." It was an old book dated 1847. She took it in triumph to her room, jumped into bed and read until her brain could hold no more. Then she fell asleep and dreamed among other things that she was out in the Bush hunting kangaroos with that handsome young squatter.



CHAPTER SIX

CHAPTER VI

A DANGER TO THE COMMUNITY

THE next morning Professor Grant was still inaccessible, and Geraldine, who was feeling unusually restless, worried patient old Daddy Durham, teased the long-suffering book-worms, saddened them by pointing out that the legacy would permit of several new secretaries, and that in consequence she would probably not be required by her father to devote herself to the Dictionary, warned them nevertheless to impress on him that she had lost all sense of scholarship, and every morsel of accuracy, and dismayed them by stating that the young man from the Bush was coming up to tell her some few details about the legacy.

"He seems a very pleasant young fellow," she added. "I'm awfully impatient to see him again."

Then she ran off, leaving the book-worms in a disturbed state of mind distinctly unfavourable to the subtle progress of the great work. They leaned back in their chairs, staring like statues, and all silently thinking the same

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thought, which was capable of being summed up in one word, the word "squatter." But eventually they settled down to their task, helped by force of habit, whilst Geraldine, having given a few housekeeping orders to Christian, ran down to her favourite barley-field, and sat on the stile which led into the open road. This had been her chosen seat ever since she was a little child; and many a happy chat she had had with the villagers who chanced to pass by. To-day Caley, a labourer, came that way, and he stopped at once and said:

"Hey, Miss Geraldine! Right glad to see ye home again! Coming down to the fields to lend a hand?"

"Of course I am, Caley," she answered. "I must do a turn at the corn. Oh, I've not forgotten how to handle the sickle. You and I are about the only surviving people that can do it, aren't we?"

She imitated the action as she spoke, and he passed on laughing approvingly. A few minutes afterwards another labourer halted in front of her.

"Hullo, Copperfield!" she said. "And how is your poor old head? Quite recovered from the bad fall?"

"Nay, Miss Geraldine," he replied. "I feel

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always so queer in the headpiece, I scarce know the difference 'twixt taters and turnips. As for reading a book, I might just as well read upside down for all I understands. It be right disheartening."

"Oh, don't be disheartened, Copperfield," she said cheerily. "That's the case with most people, I assure you. It really makes no difference to most of us whether we read a book upside down or not. It's a good healthy sign. Cheer up."

"Ay, we all cheer up when you come back, Miss Geraldine," said Copperfield.

"Look here," continued Geraldine, "don't you worry about your headpiece. And I'll come down to the other fields to-morrow, and show you the difference between turnips and potatoes! Yes, and give a hand too! I can still dig, though I'm rather out of practice!"

Copperfield nodded and went on his way, but returned to the stile and said in a mysterious voice:

"Was you a-sweethearting yet, Miss Geraldine?"

"Good heavens, no!" said Geraldine, pretending to be shocked. "Who ever heard of such a thing?"

"Well," said Copperfield smiling, "there was

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a mighty nice-looking young gentleman asked the way up here yester-afternoon. I thought he might be a-sweethearting after ye!"

"No, Copperfield," answered Geraldine. "He did not come on such an agreeable errand. He came to see my father on business. But he was very handsome, wasn't he?"

"Ay," said Copperfield, with a twinkle in his eye, "and he were the very one for ye. Think upon it."

"All right," laughed Geraldine. "I'll think upon it."

But she had not much time for thinking upon it, for Copperfield had no sooner disappeared from sight than Harold Warwick himself came upon the scene, and paused before the stile, surprised and pleased to see Geraldine sitting there.

"Good-morning, Miss Grant," he said, eagerly. "I was just going up to see you. I am lucky to find you here."

"To save yourself the hill?" she asked gaily. "What laziness! And at your time of life, too!"

"I don't think there are many mountains I would not climb to pay you a visit," laughed Harold Warwick.

"That is very good of you," said Geraldine,

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"especially after your ungracious reception yesterday. Of course I do not wish to exonerate Father altogether, but there is no doubt that he must have been deeply disappointed when he discovered you were not the new secretary. His mind was arranged for the new secretary, and he does not like to have his train of thought interrupted by any outside cause whatever. That is why he treated you as if you were a criminal. But we all understand that you are probably not one."

"That's very comforting," remarked the young man quaintly.

"If he had looked at you for a moment," went on Geraldine, "he would have realised that you could not possibly be a secretary. But he never looks at anyone. Now I saw at once that you were not the right person to hold dealings with a dictionary. You haven't got the right cachet, you know."

"Am I in consequence to be utterly despised?" asked Warwick.

"Not necessarily!" answered Geraldine.

"That is also comforting," he said.

"I suppose there *are* such things as dictionaries out in the Bush?" she asked, mischievously.

"Oh, yes, I believe so," he said. "But I

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regret to say they are not considered priceless possessions."

"But I suppose not to be utterly despised?" she suggested.

"Not necessarily!" he replied.

"Well, that is good news," she answered, and they both laughed light-heartedly at their own silliness.

"You know you ought to come out to the Bush," he said, "or to the great distances somewhere. It wouldn't matter much where. I don't think you were intended to be shut up in a library. When you came into that dull room yesterday, it was just as if—"

He stopped abruptly and looked at her.

"Well," she said, with a smile, encouraging him.

"It was just as if you had brought the great distances with you," he continued. "And I said to myself: 'She belongs to them, and by Jove, sooner or later she'll have to come out to them!'"

"Heaven only knows I should be delighted," said Geraldine, "I am perfectly sick of college life."

"Yes, I don't wonder," he said, sympathetically. "That sort of thing must be as bad as penal servitude."

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"But now it has all come to an end," she went on. "And I am free to do anything I like, provided that I choose a suitable profession. Father wants me to work at the Dictionary. But perhaps he will not mind so much about that now that he has some extra money, and can have extra help without stint or measure. Also I have different plans for myself."

"Why, I should think so, indeed!" Warwick exclaimed.

"He has always wanted me to live the life of a scholar and a recluse," she said. "Unfortunately I have never felt like the one or the other."

"No, I can understand that," he remarked. "I don't suppose you care any more about books than I do. You don't look booky. You haven't got the right—what do you call it—cachet I think you said!"

"No," she laughed, "I don't think I have."

"It would be a positive crime to shut you up amongst books," he said. "Your father can't mean it seriously."

"Father thinks books are the only things worth living for or with," Geraldine answered, "and a library with hermetically-sealed windows the only fit place to live in. From his point of view, you see, he wants the best for me."

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It would never occur to him that an out-of-door life would be suitable for me or anyone."

"Well, I suppose we are all narrow, each in our own way," said Warwick, "for it would never occur to me that an indoor life would be suitable for anyone."

"Have you always been an open-air person?" she asked, eagerly.

"More or less all my life," he answered, smiling, "and of course of necessity so since I've been in Australia."

"Then you're not Australian?" she asked.

"No, I'm English," he said, "but I've been out in the Bush eight years."

"Aren't you glad to come back?" she asked, with increasing interest in him.

"Oh, yes," he replied, "but I shouldn't like to stop. I simply couldn't breathe in this sort of country. Of course it's awfully pretty and all that, but it's so small, and I should miss the space so fearfully. It's a funny thing about that space. It takes hold of you in a curious way. Nothing could ever make up to me for it now. And then the life out there, you know! It's so splendidly free. I wouldn't change it for a big fortune and a big place in England. But it's fine to come home and take a look round."

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"It's strange you should speak about space," Geraldine said. "Ever since I could remember, I've always hungered for it. But no one I've ever met has known anything about it. I've never seen anyone like you. I've been brought up with book-worms, Oxford professors, philologists, philosophers, examiners, writers of grammars and text-books, commentators of the classics—"

"My word, what a collection!" he broke in. "It's really time you got to know some squatters."

"I really think it is," she answered. "I assure you I am thoroughly tired of being with intelligent persons. It's quite refreshing to be with you."

"I suppose then that you consider me to be without intelligence?" Warwick asked, quaintly.

But Geraldine did not hear him.

"When I think of all the booky people I've been associated with ever since I can remember," she said, toying with a bit of honeysuckle from the hedge, "I only wonder how I have retained any ordinary kind of senselessness. Goodness only knows how I have escaped being a mountain of learning! I remember when I was a baby, playing with dolls with the old Greek professor. Dear old man! I shouldn't like to have been

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without him. And how often I've been hushed to sleep by the dear ugly mathematical master. To think of all the beautiful figures and puzzles he used to draw for me. What was it he used to say: 'Good-night, good-night, to rhomboids, good-night, good-night to tomboyds!' Ah, I shouldn't like to have been without him either. And there was the famous historian. And then there was Daddy Durham laden with the dialects of all the dead and living languages, and personally acquainted with all the fairies of all the countries in the world. They were very good to me—all my playmates. I shouldn't have cared for any other kind. And I don't suppose I should now, though in moments of aberration I fancy I should. No, I think on the whole, I want to stay at home, do without space, and remain with intelligent people!"

"I should like to mention incidentally for your instruction," he said, with mock seriousness, "that there is a certain amount of average intelligence out in the great world. Even if you broke your bonds and went forth, you would not necessarily have to associate with idiots. You may not know it, but I'm not an idiot. And my poor old boss up at Murrengunna who left the legacies to your father and mother—he

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wasn't an idiot either. And that reminds me. I made an awful hash of my visit to your father yesterday. I ought to have spoken about those legacies in a less clumsy fashion."

"Oh, but you weren't clumsy," she said, her manner becoming grave at once. "You were not to know that my mother was dead."

"I can't understand how it was," he said, "that my old boss didn't know about your father's change of name and your mother's death."

"I can't understand either," she answered. "I've been longing to ask you."

"It's true he'd been out of touch with everybody and everything for years," continued Warwick. "Still it's surprising even then. He'd been out in the Bush twenty-one years. Twenty-one years ago he took up a run, in an outlying district—about a hundred square miles, I think it was."

Geraldine nodded, and the young man went on:

"He was such a queer old fellow. He was one of those detached creatures who appear to have nothing in common with normal people. He scarcely ever spoke. I don't know whether he'd always been like that, but during the eight years I've been with him, he was as silent as a

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Bushman. I suppose the greatest amount of talking he ever did was when he lay ill those last weeks and I looked after him. I shall never forget that time. It made a deep impression on me. And I was so full of the story yesterday, and your father did not seem interested in the least. I tell you I felt downright indignant that poor old James Howard should have left his money and his last messages to one who cared so little for his memory. Your father did not ask me a single question."

"But I ask you," said Geraldine, eagerly. "Tell me the whole story. I know nothing, have heard nothing. I have not even seen my Father since your interview with him. I beg of you to tell me all you know, and to try and remember if the old man said anything about my mother. I've never met anyone who could talk to me of her."

They had found their way into the barley-field, and were sitting on two old tree-trunks drawn up near the hedge, and under the shelter of a great oak. The breeze caught the barley and moved it gently with a rhythm which no music could imitate, and together with the play of light lent it a subtle sheen the secret of which is surely not known to any painter's cunning. Now and then a butterfly flew near them. Now

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and then a bird overhead sang a few notes and left off, remembering it was summer time and therefore not the season for symphonies.

Harold Warwick drew a little nearer to Geraldine. His voice was solemn when he spoke of James Howard. It was obvious that he had been deeply attached to the old man, and treasured his memory with something like reverence.

"I did not know much about my old boss till he lay dying," he said. "I didn't think he had any friends in England. In all my recollection of him, he only spoke once of England and English people, and that was when I first saw him. I'd just arrived in Sydney and gone to Petty's Hotel, and at breakfast I had the good fortune to meet this old fellow who had come to Sydney to see some cattle sold at Home Bush. He had looked after the trucking himself, and sold them at £7 a head. That was a good price, and I suppose it put him in good spirits and made him feel less morose for once in his life. Anyway, he was awfully kind to me. I think he took a fancy to me because I'd come direct from England; for he said there was only one country in the world for the heart of an Englishman, and that was England. And he asked me where I came from, and when I told him Cambridge-

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shire, his grim face lit up and he said: 'Why, that's my county, too.' But from that day when I went back with him to his run, until the time when he was taken ill, eight years, mind you, he never referred to England. Never once. But one night he asked me to open a little box of papers and look for a card with the name of Robert Cliveden on it."

"My father's name," Geraldine said, tense with interest.

"I found it," Warwick went on. "It was carefully wrapped up in several folds of paper, as though it was a jewel, and enclosed in a leather pocket-book. I thought there must be something else in the little parcel, and I asked him if that was all he expected to find there, and he answered that there was nothing else, and that this card was his most precious possession. I put it into his hands, and he seemed pleased. He turned it over several times to read the name of a firm of solicitors written on the back. He made me restore it to its safe place, and said nothing further to me till the next day. But I found him looking at me with that curious look people have on their faces when they're wanting to say something to you and can't. And at last he began to speak of your father and mother."

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"Tell me what he said of her," Geraldine put in with almost painful eagerness.

Harold Warwick gave her a quick glance of sympathy.

"The old man said your mother was very beautiful."

Geraldine nodded.

"Very fair."

Geraldine nodded again.

"And merciful," he added.

"Merciful?" she asked, in surprise.

"Yes, that was his expression," Warwick replied. "He seemed to lay more stress on that than on anything else in connection with her, because he said it was so rare for the young and innocent to be merciful. I can see him now sitting up in bed, and can hear him speaking of her and of your father with almost his last strength. You can't think how solemn that great loneliness felt, peopled only by him and me. I suppose tragedies are tragedies anywhere. But, do you know, I'm sure they gain in intensity and dignity when you see them or hear of them in desolate lands."

He seemed lost in thought for a moment, and was called back to actuality by the sound of Geraldine's voice begging him to go on with the story.

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"Well," he said, recovering himself, "I should tell you I'd been the old man's manager for nearly two years, and of course I knew all about his business affairs on general lines. But he now charged me with them in detail, and then, to my great surprise, began to tell me his private history. It appears he had disgraced himself irretrievably, and his relations and friends turned from him, and cast him off. He did not complain. He was not bitter. And he did not excuse himself. I thought that was awfully pathetic. After all those years, and at that great distance off where no one could challenge his statements, he made no attempt to under-rate his mistakes of honour and morality by pleading extenuating circumstances. He just gave the facts and left them. But he said that in the hour of his great need, when all other doors were barred to him, your father's house was opened wide for him. Your father's beautiful young bride ministered to him. She poured the wine for him. She pressed the food on him. She did everything that kindness and gentleness could devise to help his despondency. She laughed at the words failure, disgrace, disaster, shame. '*Be of good cheer,*' she said. '*A new life over the seas and fresh courage. All is not lost.*' And do you know, those were the old

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man's last words as he was passing away: '*A new life over the seas and fresh courage. All is not lost.*' "

He paused again, and Geraldine waited silently, her thoughts in communion with her dead mother, the eyes of her mind seeing the picture which the young man drew for her, and her heart attuned to sympathy with the old squatter who had kept his gratitude intact during a long lifetime.

"You see now why he called her merciful," Warwick went on. "She knew his history and she did not turn from him. She and your father treated him, the outcast, as an honourable gentleman. He stayed with them until his journey was arranged for. He told me he sat by the fire all day, crouched in misery and shame. And she sat near him, working at her embroidery, sympathetic in silence as well as in speech. When the time came for him to go, they both saw him off at the docks. And he said that because of their great kindness, there remained for ever in his mind lovely memories of the land he was never to see again. And to show that he had not forgotten, he left his money to them, a third to your father and two-thirds to your mother. He was very particular about the proportion, and the figuring out of

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the probable value of the legacies. He had worked his herd up to about four thousand head, and after calculating his liabilities, he found he could easily leave them £3000. It was awfully pathetic to see how pleased he was to think that he was going to send this to them. And he gave me the most minute description of their appearance, so that I might recognise them. For the lapse of time didn't come into the old man's reckoning. He described your mother—and it might have been you. Yes, it might have been you."

There was a tone of frank admiration in his last words, but if it reached her, she gave no sign. Her eyes were fixed on the ground, and she was leaning forward, her elbows on her knees, and her pretty face framed tightly between her hands. Her mind was far away, wandering alone on an unknown path. Warwick did not seek to disturb her thoughts; he knew that she was thinking of her mother, and that the story of the old man which had touched him deeply, must of necessity be affecting her with a tender compassion handed down from her own mother's merciful sympathy. So he waited, and at last she looked up and spoke.

"Did he seem quite sure that they were both alive?" she asked slowly.

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"The question was never even raised," he answered. "I thought, of course, that he had been in some sort of communication with them, until I went to the lawyer and discovered that my old boss had not even known your father's change of name."

"Did the lawyer seem surprised that there should be a legacy left to my mother?" asked Geraldine.

"I did not notice it," said Warwick. "He was pompous and formal, and determined to keep me at my proper distance; but that seems to be the correct way of dealing with a stranger in England. He gave me your father's name and address, but said that he would at once communicate with him; and I left the original papers with him and came away. But as I had promised the old man to see your father personally and give his last messages myself, I found my way here."

She rose from the old tree-trunk and turned to him with some of her bright impulsiveness which could not be long quelled by earnest thought.

"I am going to be very grateful to you for coming," she said. "You know this is the first time I have ever had any real talk with anyone about my mother. When I have asked my father, he has always answered: 'Alas, I

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lost her when my heart was young. I cannot speak of her.' I can't tell you how comforting it is to hear of her at last, and to hear such beautiful things of her too. It has roused in me a great longing to know more."

And she added:

"It was lovely of the old man to leave her the larger share, wasn't it?"

"Yes," said Warwick. "He was very keen about that. It was his only way, you see, of showing her the larger tribute."

"And he must have thought a great deal of my father to have kept that card so safely all these years," Geraldine said. "I'm glad to know that."

"He spoke of your father with the greatest admiration," Warwick said. "He said he had the big mind which understood."

"The big mind which understood," Geraldine repeated doubtfully.

"I expected to meet some one quite different from your father," Warwick went on. "I don't, of course, mean anything disrespectful to him, but his coldness and indifference were a surprise to me. I had so much to tell him, and it seems incredible that he didn't care to hear. Our black boys up at Murrengunna would have cared more."

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"But that's Father all over," she said. "That's his nature. I should have been astonished if he had been interested. But I can make up to you for your disappointment. Indeed I shall have to ask you to be very patient with me, and tell me the whole story over again, not once, but many, many times."

"As many times as you wish," he answered eagerly.

"Are you sure you can be patient?" she asked, beginning to be light-hearted again. "I don't think you can. You haven't got the cachet!"

"Alas!" he said. "I suffer from serious disadvantages in my appearance."

He looked so handsome and attractive standing there with an expression of mock humility on his face, that Geraldine laughed from sheer pleasure in his presence. Yesterday he had been a stranger to her. To-day she could have sworn that she had known him all her life, and that he had returned to her from a far-off land and a far-off time, and that he was the same as he had ever been, kind, chivalrous and joyous. A light stole into her eyes—and into his.

"Come," she said impulsively. "We'll go up to the station or run or whatever you call it, and I'll show you some of our sights. It's

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true we haven't any gum-trees, or cork-trees, but we have an old yew hedge dating back to Henry VIII., and a fine bowling-green. And you must see the Ladies' Garden, too, and the fish-ponds. You may not know it, but you've come to an interesting old-world place. Of course, you must remember that it is not out in the Bush. But I can't help that, can I?"

"No," he laughed. "But don't distress yourself! I'm quite content not to be in the Bush at the present moment!"

So they went toward the house, through the barley-field, frankly pleased to be together, finding many subjects to talk about less serious than that of their recent conversation, and being young and gay, traversing easily enough the bridge which separates the sad things of the past from the joyous facts of the present.

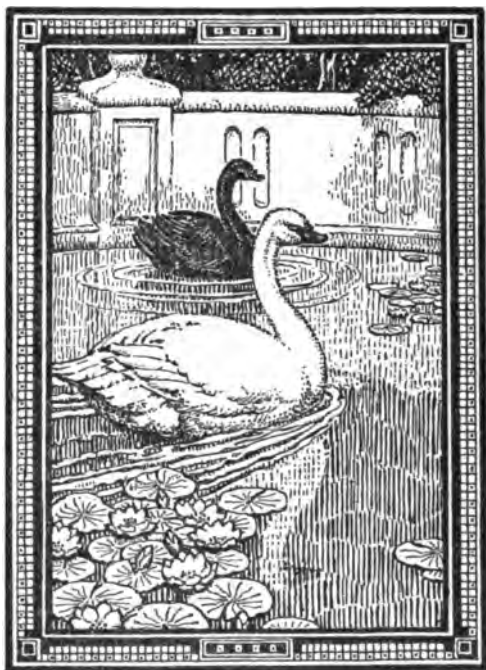
When they came to the bowling-green, the sound of their voices and of Geraldine's well-loved laughter reached the ears of the book-worms who had done victorious battle with their emotions and were giving their entire attention to the exacting demands of the Dictionary.

"What is that?" Mr. Gulliver asked un-easily, putting down his pen.

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Mr. Hetherly glanced in the direction of the window, and then closed his eyes.

“The young squatter with Miss Geraldine,” he said. “As I remarked before, a dangerous person to our community.”



CHAPTER SEVEN

CHAPTER VII

VISITORS TO THE YEW HOUSE

Now it so happened that a week or two before Harold Warwick found his way to the Yew House, Miss Charlotta Selbourne, a famous actress, came to stay with her friends, Mr. and Mrs. George Raleigh, who had rented for the summer months one of the finest places in the lovely neighbourhood of Milchester. Miss Selbourne had been ordered by her doctor to take a long rest before beginning the rehearsals of her new play, and she herself was fully persuaded of the wisdom of this advice. At first she wandered about the grounds and pretended to enjoy the peaceful isolation. But she soon ceased even to pretend.

"I must have events," she confessed, "and plenty of them too, no matter how simple! Contemplation may be good for my soul, but it isn't good for my brain! No, my dears. Out with the guide-book of the county, and let me go and see every inch of the ground!"

So the guide-book was studied by everyone of the household, and innumerable outings were

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planned and undertaken. She was kept busy with visits to old churches, quaint old homesteads, abbey-ruins, Roman camps, British fortifications and all the scenes of historic interest for miles around; and as she was genuinely interested in what she saw, it was quite possible to minister to her continuous pleasure. Moreover, all her friends were glad to serve her, for she was a most lovable woman, with a generous heart, full of noble impulses; and if her temperament unconsciously demanded much of others, she at least gave back without stint or measure. But the list of excursions was coming dangerously to an end, and the Raleighs, holding solemn council, were racking their brains for new items so that there might be no dark gap of depression between the events, when help came from an unexpected quarter. Edward Bland, a resident of the country-side, who was slightly acquainted with the Raleighs, told them of the curious old Yew House with its oak-panelled library. He said it was one of the prettiest sixteenth century homesteads in the kingdom. But he added immediately afterwards that it would not be possible to penetrate into that scholars' stronghold where no visitors were ever welcomed, and that it was foolish of him to have started the idea.

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But Charlotta Selbourne's interest was aroused.

"A sixteenth century homestead with an oak-panelled library!" she said delightedly. "The very thing I am most wanting to see. There's to be a library scene in the new play, and nothing could help me more than to take a few suggestions from this old house. Let us go now—this moment!"

"Yes, let's go now!" they all chimed in.

Edward Bland laughed.

"Oh, it isn't such an easy matter, I assure you," he said. "Professor Grant is a stern, forbidding recluse."

"But I'm not afraid of stern, forbidding recluses," said Miss Selbourne gaily. "Do let us go at once. All the more fun if there are a few difficulties."

"And then there are three secretaries, typical fossils," he added.

"And who's frightened of fossils, I should like to know?" she put in.

"All living in the strictest retirement and working at a monumental Dictionary," he went on. "You see for yourself that the circumstances are sufficiently appalling."

Miss Selbourne was immensely amused and interested.

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"A dictionary!" she laughed. "That's not appalling. Why, a dictionary is a faithful and never-failing friend. I'm sure I don't know how I should get on without a spelling-book. I never could spell two consecutive words properly!"

"I should like Professor Grant and his secretaries to hear you call their great work a spelling-book," said Bland smiling. "It is positive blasphemy. It even shocks me. As a neighbourhood, we are rather proud of that exclusive house which will have nothing to say to us. It's true that the daughter speaks to us sometimes; but she is seldom at home. But that reminds me. She came back two or three days ago. Now she might perhaps help us, if you really must see that library."

"And is she a fossil, too?" asked Miss Selbourne. "I suppose she must be, since she belongs to such an atmosphere."

"Oh, no, she's not a fossil," said Bland. "She's a gay, charming young thing of twenty, and very pretty. She is genial enough in herself. She and I sometimes exchange a few remarks about angling when we meet. She is an expert at it, and as it is my favourite hobby, we generally have something to say to each other."

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"But this is distinctly hopeful," said Miss Selbourne. "A fisherman sounds more promising than a fossil. Surely she will receive us."

"She would if she could," Bland replied. "But the difficulty is that her father won't allow any other of her sex at the house. No woman's fame or beauty would count for anything with him. He is a stern woman-hater. Even the servants are all men."

"Why, this gets more and more interesting," said Miss Selbourne. "Do let us go at once. I don't mind risking a snubbing. It will be good for me."

"It will at least be a new experience for you, Charlotta!" laughed her friends. "And an event!"

"I will go out to meet it with patient humility," she answered, with a twinkle in her eye, and it was evident that whatever anyone might say about the possibility of a rebuff, she herself did not believe in such an improbable absurdity. For she was always accustomed to have her own way, her beautiful appearance and charm of manner adding to the influence inseparable from her successful career. She was about forty years old, tall and of a carriage which was hers and hers only. No one who knew her tried to define it by one single

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word. It had dignity, grace and liveliness, combined with a certain conquering quality entirely unaggressive. And on this occasion, when she dressed herself in her most becoming costume and came downstairs armed and well prepared for an adventure, the conquering air was accentuated by a touch of fun which at once let itself be felt by her companions also. They started off in good spirits, determined to brave all dangers and see that oak-panelled library at all costs.

It was arranged amongst them that only Miss Selbourne and Mr. Bland should ask for admittance at first, Mr. Bland being chosen instead of George Raligh, because as a resident he ran less chance of unmitigated insult, and would therefore have more authority in urging Miss Selbourne's request. Also, in addition to the advantage he possessed of being on angling terms with the daughter of the house, he had once or twice given Davy a cigar, and this was thought to be a still greater claim to consideration. They left the carriage a little way down the road, and entered a pretty little park containing some fine old elm-trees. They strolled up the drive and paused before the creeper-covered gate-house. There was no one around, and not

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a sound to be heard. They passed through the open door of the gate-house and found themselves in a small paved courtyard. There stood the Yew House itself, joined to its outer domain by a wing on the left, thus forming altogether three sides of a square. The upper part of the courtyard which served as a terrace, was reached by a double flight of stone steps meeting on a grass-grown platform. Miss Selbourne mounted these steps and glanced around in delighted surprise. The twentieth century had vanished by magic into the time of the Tudors. Everything here spoke of the old world. She felt there was every reason to suppose that a knight in full armour would at that very moment, encumbered by his mail, clamber out from the house, mount his horse and ride off to the wars. The women would be watching him from the mullioned windows. His lady-wife, with his children clinging to her, would be lingering on the terrace, listening sadly to the distant sound of the horses' hoofs. It was easy enough for an imaginative mind to conjure up this and many another scene of bygone days. Charlotta Selbourne was completely spell-bound by the "spirit of place" and Edward Bland seeing this, left her to its influence. But at last she came back to real life and followed her companion up to

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the great entrance surmounted by the arms of the fine old family to which the manor had once belonged.

They rang the bell, and waited for several moments. As no one came, they rang again, this time more boldly, and after some further delay Davy opened to them. Now Davy adored women, and always felt it to be a serious deprivation in his life that, with the exception of Miss Geraldine, the female sex was banished from his master's household. Time had not reconciled the coast-guardsman to this sad state of things, nor tempered his admiration for those delightful beings against whom it was his painful duty to bar the door. And now in front of his admiring eyes stood one of them, but at the back of his brain lowered his master. The expression on his face was in consequence a curious mixture of pleasure and alarm. But he was not too confused to see that the lady was specially beautiful, and that she was holding a card-case in her hand, whilst her companion, whom he had not at first observed, was taking from his breast-pocket something which looked uncommonly like a cigar-case. He glanced at Mr. Edward Bland, and the memory of an extra fine Havannah brought a smile of recognition about his lips.

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"Good-afternoon," Bland said, nodding genially. "Can we possibly see the Professor for a few minutes?"

Davy shook his head gravely, at once assuming a professional sentinel manner.

"Not the least chance, sir," he answered. "No one has seen the Master for a day or two."

"Is he ill?" asked Miss Selbourne, in her most sympathetic manner.

"Yes, Madam," said Davy, blushing, and relaxing at once at the sound of her voice.

"What is the matter with him? Overwork?" asked Edward Bland.

"No, sir, he's had a legacy left him," said Davy simply, as though he were merely mentioning a recognised complaint of which the seriousness would be taken for granted. His gravity checked the impulse of the visitors to exchange an amused smile. They both felt that, considering the circumstances, they must at least pretend to appreciate the important significance of this subtle malady; and Charlotte Selbourne at once said:

"Of course, we could not dream of intruding on the Professor personally."

"But," she added, coaxingly, "do you think if I were to send in my card, he would perhaps

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allow me to see the oak-panelled library? I have heard that it is very beautiful, and I have a great wish to see it."

Davy looked at the card, at Miss Selbourne, and finally at Mr. Edward Bland. He was torn by a strong wish to please this lovely visitor and by a stern sense of duty to his master. Edward Bland saw his embarrassment and came to the rescue.

"This is an exceptional case," he said. "Professor Grant would know this lady's famous name. You probably know it yourself."

"Yes," answered Davy, blushing like a school-boy. "But it won't be any use to ask him. He doesn't care for ladies to come to the house. Miss Geraldine's the only one that's ever allowed here. I'll go if you wish, sir, but I know the answer by heart. Time after time I've turned ladies away from this door, and felt mighty bad about it, too, I can tell you."

He looked so apologetic and harassed, that both visitors laughed good-naturedly; and Charlotte Selbourne comforted him greatly by saying that it was pleasant to know he did not share his master's prejudices.

"Look here," said Edward Bland, who had been writing something on one of Miss Selbourne's cards. "You go and have a try. Ask

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him to look at the card and to read those few words. You see, I've said that Miss Selbourne has heard of his fine old oak-panelled library and would immensely like to see it, as it would help her for one of the scenes in her new play. I'm sure he will consider it an honour to grant her request. We will wait here quietly on the terrace so as not to get you into trouble."

Davy seemed entirely bewildered by this commission. He received the card in silence, looked as though he were going to drop it, but, fortified by Miss Selbourne's smile, managed to retain hold of it and to disappear with it into the house.

"Hadn't the heart to refuse her," he said to himself several times, "but it's not a job I'm liking."

He knocked at his master's bedroom door, devoutly praying that he would be refused admittance and that he would therefore be prevented from giving this impossible message. But he did not build any real hopes on this chance. Experience had taught Davy, amongst many other things, that the Professor always recovered from his sulks at the inopportune moment. This might happen now. But no. For once the Professor behaved in an appropriate fashion. He thundered out that he would

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not be disturbed for anyone, and, opening the door, dismissed the coast-guardsmen angrily without even hearing what he wanted. Davy gave a sigh of relief. It was a simple and courteous way out of the difficulty; and he hurried back to the upper terrace to tell the two visitors waiting there that he had not been able to deliver his message. It was obvious that Miss Selbourne did not enjoy being thwarted; but she bore her ordeal with quite a respectable amount of saintliness, and turning to Edward Bland she said:

"I am afraid we must give it up, unless perhaps we could see the daughter."

"She's not at home," Davy answered, regretfully. "She went out a little while ago with the handsome young gentleman from Australia. If she was here, we might manage it—she'd—"

He broke off suddenly, and his face lit up with smiles.

"If you'll step this way into the Ladies' Garden," he said, "I'll fetch the telescope and find out if she's within reach. She may be in the barley-field yonder. That's her favourite place."

They waited in a lovely little retired garden, formerly the pleasance for the ladies of the

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household. They were much amused by the unexpected collaboration of the telescope and were wondering whether their expedition was really destined to be successful, when they were joined by the coast-guardsmen, who carried the friendly instrument under his arm and appeared to be in a state of pleasurable excitement and willing eagerness.

"She's there," he said, smiling knowingly, "they're both there in the barley-field! Lucky I thought of it! If you follow me, through this door and along this path straight through the plantation, I'll go first and take the cards."

He ran on in front, they following at their leisure, so as to give Davy time to break the news of the impending interruption. Charlotta Selbourne was a little self-reproachful at disturbing the two young people.

"The handsome young gentleman from Australia won't be pleased, will he?" she said. "There really do seem to be a great many dangers! And we had not reckoned on this one. But at least it sounds nice and human—a handsome young gentleman from Australia!"

And meanwhile the handsome young gentleman and Geraldine were sitting on the tree-trunk at the end of the barley-field smoking

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cigarettes and having a good long talk together. They had a great deal to say to each other. There seemed to be an endless number of questions to be asked and answered. Geraldine was twenty; Harold Warwick was twenty-five. Many important things happen in forty-five years. They clamour to be told if the right person is there to listen. So Warwick heard about Geraldine's life, about her loneliness as a child, her father's sternness, Daddy Durham's gentleness, the book-worms, the Dictionary, her secret ambition to go on the stage, and always her great longing to know more of her mother's history. She referred to this several times, and Warwick had to tell her over again from the beginning all he had learnt from the old dying squatter at Murrengunna station. And this led them up to his own life. Geraldine wanted to know why he had chosen to go out to the Bush.

"Oh, it came about in a most natural manner," he said. "You see I'd always cared for outdoor life and always been fond of animals. And as a boy I used to spend all my holidays with my uncle who had a place in Warwickshire. I was staying with him when my father died. I was only sixteen then and still at University College School which I hated. I always hated

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books. No offence to the Dictionary, by the way!"

"I quite understand," said Geraldine, smiling. "Moreover the Dictionary is not touchy!"

"Well," he went on, "we had to decide what was to become of me. Father had left a few hundred pounds, and my uncle thought I'd better train to be a doctor. But by a piece of good luck, an old friend of his, a rich Australian squatter came to stay there, and he was awfully kind to me. He said it was a shame to chain me up as a doctor, and that the life out in the Bush would just suit me. He advised that I should leave school and have a year at the Veterinary College and also learn book-keeping by single and double entry."

"I never heard anything so funny!" exclaimed Geraldine. "What on earth has that to do with cattle?"

"Well, that was what I thought," said Warwick. "But the squatter said that any black could do the sort of things I thought useful for the life, such as riding and breaking in horses and so on, and that for the first six months I'd be in everybody's way. But if I'd learnt book-keeping, I'd be welcome at any station, and could earn enough to keep myself at once. And he was awfully emphatic about Virgil."

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"About Virgil?" Geraldine laughed.

"Yes," said Warwick. "He said I was to learn every word of the Georgics, as I'd find there the best training possible in animal and agricultural economy. He said nothing truer or more helpful had ever been written. Of course, I thought he was mad."

"I don't wonder," she put in. "I should have thought he was raving mad!"

"But he wasn't," continued the young man. "I proved later that every word he said was true, though it all sounded queer enough. And amongst other things he advised that if I went out, I was to take no money with me, but get four or five years' experience first, and then my money would be useful to me. He took a lot of trouble about me, and I believe would have put me in the way of things, but he died suddenly at his hotel in London, about three days after he had been with us. But we followed the old chap's advice. Of course, I kicked at the Georgics and the book-keeping, but managed to do them somehow or other. You see I have a certain amount of intelligence."

"Why, yes, you must have, if you took good advice," she answered. "As Mr. Hetherly, our philosopher-bookworm, would say: '*Human nature takes advice only by a supreme effort of intelligence.*'"

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"I assure you it was a supreme effort," Warwick laughed. "But it was worth while. It got me my job at once. I think I told you I met old James Howard the very first morning I arrived in Sydney. And directly I said I could keep books, he offered to give me £40 a year and all found if I liked to go back with him to his station. He said he would teach me all he knew and that it would be a good training for a future important post on a large station."

"So you said 'Done,' I suppose?" Geraldine asked.

"Yes," he answered, "and we started for Murrengunna the next morning. We took train and arrived at our terminus at night, where we found the old man's buggy and horses waiting in charge of a white man and a black boy. We camped on a water-hole, had a good fire, and made an early start the next morning. We drove about twenty-four miles, camped midday under gum-trees on a creek, hobbled the horses, turned them out, and had tea, salt-beef and johnny cakes. And I can tell you, quart pot tea and johnny cakes under the gum-trees when you're thirsty and hungry is something to remember. Then we travelled on till sundown when we reached Lily Lagoon. And there we camped for the

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night again. Some blacks were camping there too. They were fishing when we arrived, and they brought us some fish, and we gave them in exchange tobacco, flour, tea and sugar. Then the boss had his fly-tent out and turned in for the night. But I lay out in the open under the stars with a saddle for a pillow. I didn't sleep, though. I was too excited and fascinated by this new experience for that. And I was listening to the silence all the time, you know. At daylight we got up horses and reached Murrengunna Homestead that night. I shall never forget that first taste of the life. It was splendid! I felt tremendously stirred up. It was the very thing I had been longing for, and I felt I had come into my own at last."

He paused a moment to light another cigarette, and Geraldine said:

"Do go on. Do tell me how you set to work. Were you really in everyone's way for the first six months? Was the book-keeping really useful? Did the Virgil help you? Was the old man good to you?"

"Good to me. I should just think he was!" the young fellow replied, eagerly. "No one could have had a better friend in life. Of course, I was rather awkward at first, being only a new chum, but I was soon licked into

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shape, and as for Virgil, by Jove! I was amazed at what he'd taught me."

And then he told her how he had to learn to go quietly amongst the cattle, and how if any sheep were travelling through the run, he was sent off to see that they did not go beyond the limit, half a mile on each side of the track. He called this "monkey dodging," and said it was not much of a gay job to crawl after them, for they moved slowly, feeding as they went. Then he helped to run the fences, and the old man had some imported studs which had to be looked after. And the cattle had to be mustered, calves branded up, rations weighed out, and there were endless other things to be got through during the day, and in the evenings he made up the books and filled in the diary. On Sunday afternoons he sometimes went out to shoot wild turkey. He said that when he first arrived, he was lucky enough to cure one of the old man's horses of a fistula, and this set him up in the estimation of the stockmen and the black boys and even the Malay cook!

"It was only a chance," he said, laughing at the recollection, "but they thought I knew a lot."

And then he went on to describe the country, and told her that Murrengunna was a specially

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fine district, with salt bush dotted about, always a sign of good country. And that the boss had been a sharp old chap to settle there. He only hoped that when he came to get a station of his own, he might have such downright good luck in his choice.

"But there's time enough to think about that," he said, "for I shan't be wanting a run of my own yet."

"Then what are you going to do now?" she asked, with great interest.

"Oh, I'm going back, of course," he said, "after I've had my spell; for there's a splendid job waiting for me. You see, I'd been manager at Murrengunna for the last two years of my old boss's life and had been entrusted with the cattle sales at Home Bush. And this brought me in touch with the directors of a big pastoral company, and when the old man's property was realised, they offered me the management of a very large cattle-station at £1,000 a year to begin with, and all found. And this is what I'm going back to."

"They must have thought very well of you," Geraldine said, warmly.

"Oh, I don't know," he answered, blushing a little. "You see the old boss liked me and took no end of trouble with me. So I owe it

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all to him—every bit of it. This very job I'm going back to I owe to him. For when he was giving me his last injunctions about his affairs and these legacies he did not forget me. Almost with his dying hand he wrote a few lines to his executors saying that he wanted my services retained until everything was wound up, and that he had every confidence in recommending me as an efficient manager and that I was suitable for any place of trust in all matters relating to general station-management. He knew that would be a tremendous feather in my cap, kind old boss. For you see, having merely done good deals at Home Bush wouldn't have been enough to get me this fine berth. No, it was the old man's certificate that did the trick."

"It was splendid of him," Geraldine said, impulsively. "I wish I could have known him, and thanked him."

Then she added:

"But you seem to have used your intelligence during those eight years."

"Well, as I told you before," he answered, "there is a certain amount of intelligence floating about in the outside world!"

"And fancy about the Virgil," she said. "I can't get over that! That is a plum to tell the book-worms! I'm sure they don't know

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every word of the Georgics! But do go on! Tell me some more immediately! I can't begin to say how interested I am. Of course, you'll end by being a squatter yourself, won't you?"

"*Rather*," he said, "and a rich one, by Jove! I'm going to make a big success of it, and later on I mean to go into the House and become Minister for Lands and put things on a better footing!"

"But," he added, "I don't know how I've dared to pour out to you like this. It's awfully good of you to listen to me, a stranger."

"A stranger!" she repeated, "why that's the last thing I should have called you!"

"You don't mean that?" he asked eagerly.

"I've said it now," Geraldine answered laughing. "I don't think I meant to say it! But I've always thought Time silly. As Mr. Hetherly would say: 'Time only matters for what human nature puts into it.'"

"Mr. Hetherly's evidently a sensible fellow," said Warwick. "Of course Time only *does* matter for what we put into it, and already we've—"

At that moment Davy heralded his approach by a lusty cough, and they both looked up and saw the coast-guardsmen hurrying towards them. He was beaming but breathless when he

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arrived, and only able to tell his story in excited gasps.

"Such a beautiful lady, too," he said. "I couldn't bear to send her away disappointed, Miss Geraldine, so I put her safely in the Ladies' Garden while I fetched the glass and looked you out. I thought you'd try and manage it for her, and that you'd want to do something for her when you saw her. Here's her card, and the other's—Mr. Bland's."

Geraldine held out her hand for the cards, and then sprang up in a fever of delight.

"Charlotta Selbourne!" she exclaimed. "Good Heavens! Davy, where is she? What have you done with her? She's not waiting now in the Ladies' Garden, is she? Don't say she's gone away. No, you couldn't be such a duffer as that. Oh, there she is, there she is!"

She threw away her cigarette, gave a nod of good-fellowship to Warwick who was looking distinctly disappointed that their tête-à-tête had come to an end, and stepped forward to greet the two visitors.

Edward Bland raised his hat and said:

"Miss Grant, I am sure you will forgive me for intruding on you since I bring with me Miss Charlotta Selbourne. May I have the honour of introducing her to you?"

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"It is indeed an honour, Mr. Bland," Geraldine said in her quick, impulsive way. "I didn't think such a wonderful thing could ever happen to me."

"My dear, how charming of you to say that," Charlotta Selbourne said, glancing admiringly at the girl's pretty face which was radiant with delight.

"I think it with all my heart," Geraldine answered, quite overcome with emotional pleasure and real hero-worship. "I'm so proud and glad to see you."

"But I'm afraid we are disturbing you sadly," Charlotta Selbourne said. "We've broken in upon a conference. Now that's a perfectly awful thing to do. Isn't it? Is there going to be any forgiveness, I wonder?"

And she turned to Warwick, whose sulkiness was instantly chased away by her charm and understanding.

"I think it's an awful honour for us both, Miss Selbourne," he said smiling at her, and he picked up Geraldine's jacket which she had thrown off and arranged it carefully on the tree-trunk.

"There now," he added. "You'll want to have a talk together, so we'll stroll off into the plantation."

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Charlotta Selbourne glanced after him and said merrily:

"All's well, my dear. The young man has forgiven me."

Then they laughed and settled down on the tree-trunk.

"Do you know, Miss Selbourne," the girl began, "I've always felt that if I could see you, there would be such heaps of things I should want to say to you, and now that I've got you all to myself, I'm so excited I don't remember a single word!"

Miss Selbourne put her hand on Geraldine's hand and patted it caressingly.

"I did not know that I had such a warm friend here," she said, touched by Geraldine's simple homage. "It makes me very happy, dear. I love to be loved and spoiled!"

"I can't tell you how I've longed and longed to see you, and to do something for you," Geraldine went on. "And to think that now I have a chance over that silly old panelled library where we work at the dull old Dictionary! Why, it's scarcely to be believed!"

"You are not very respectful to the library and the Dictionary!" said Charlotta Selbourne laughing.

"The trouble is that I am not a scholar

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by nature," said Geraldine. "But of course as I've been brought up on the Dictionary, I have a sort of acquired affection for it, and as for the library itself, I admire it ever so much when I'm not working in it! It really is a beautiful old room, a veritable haven for scholars. But you'll come and see for yourself, won't you? For I've read the message which was intended for my father. I shall be delighted to show it to you—and the whole house, too, if you wish. It's a most quaint old house. I'm sure you'd be interested in it. Would you like to come now?"

"Would it suit you if we came now?" Charlotte Selbourne asked.

"Why, yes, yes, of course!" exclaimed Geraldine. "Any time would suit, any minute!"

Her face fell suddenly, and she added:

"No, perhaps another day would be better, because then I could show you the whole place, the fish-ponds, the yew hedge, and the bowling-green and everything. You see—well it sounds dreadfully ungracious to say it—but Father doesn't care for women—or for anything, indeed, except dictionaries! And I know for certain he is going to Oxford the day after to-morrow. I can't think what I should do with-

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out Oxford! It's a most valuable factor in the economy of my life!"

"It evidently has some subtle use," laughed Charlotta Selbourne much amused. "I think it would be best to wait for the intervention of Oxford. Shall we say twelve o'clock the day after to-morrow? Or does the timely expedition not take place till the afternoon?"

"No, it takes place in the morning," Geraldine answered gaily, "Father has to leave here before nine to catch the train. Twelve will do beautifully. I shall love to show you round. And you must see the ghost-room and lots of other things."

"I shall be delighted," said Miss Selbourne. "It is good of you, dear. You are really doing me a service."

"I hope I haven't seemed uncourteous in speaking of Father's peculiarity," Geraldine said. "The fact is, he is a little difficult about some things, and we just have to do the best we can."

"Why, of course, I quite understand," Miss Selbourne said. "Besides, I've already heard from Mr. Bland that your father is a learned scholar who dislikes women. But I think he must surely love you."

Geraldine looked up surprised.

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"Oh, no," she said. "I couldn't expect that of Father. He only lives for the great work of his life, the compiling of this stupendous Dictionary. I never remember him caring about anything else."

"Then is there no one to love you in this old Yew House?" asked Miss Selbourne gently.

"Oh, yes," she answered. "There's our dear old little Professor of Poetry, and the three faithful, devoted book-worms, Mr. Gulliver, Mr. Winter, and Mr. Hetherly, and there's Davy, the coast-guardsman, whom you've seen, and Christian, the Norwegian ship's cook and—"

"And the handsome young man who made that brave struggle to forgive me?" whispered Miss Selbourne slyly.

"Perhaps!" returned Geraldine, in a merry whisper, and the two women laughed together mysteriously after the manner of two girl comrades enjoying some important piece of news known to them and them only, and to be kept entirely secret from the prying world.

They were still laughing when Warwick and Bland joined them.



CHAPTER EIGHT



CHAPTER VIII

A HINDRANCE TO THE DICTIONARY

THE book-worms were feeling sore that Geraldine had forsaken them so entirely for the strange young man from the Colonies. They had been counting on her companionship as one counts on the flowers in spring. They said to each other sadly that never before had she failed to give them some of her time for work or play; but she was so taken up with this ignorant squatter, that she did not seem to have a moment to spare for the Dictionary itself or for them. They did not blame her seriously.

"She is young," they said; "she is amusing herself. She knows we are here, always waiting for her."

Still they were sad, and Mr. Gulliver, caring the most, was the saddest of them all. It was in vain that he reasoned with himself; for the best reasoning in the world can never overcome jealousy. He had marked off the days, the hours until her return; he had tidied his desk which she had always shared with him when she came

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home; he had put her favourite inkpot ready for her, her little vase of flowers, a box of chocolates, without which she vowed she could not work intelligently. But the library did not see her; she was out in the gardens, or in the barley-field, or else roaming over the downs, and there was no need for Mr. Gulliver to have given up his chair and put a cushion in it for her comfort. And there was evidently no need for him to have set aside a large package of slips containing quotations for her to verify and meanings for her to sort.

The book-worms did not talk a great deal about their disappointment; it was only by a few isolated words thrown out here and there that each knew what the other was thinking; but it so happened that the morning after Geraldine's meeting with Miss Selbourne, they were unitedly deploring her continued absence from their midst, when Davy came into the library with a message from Professor Grant that he wished to see Mr. Gulliver immediately.

"Probably about the new secretary," said Mr. Gulliver, as he rose from his seat. "The sooner we get that matter settled the better. We certainly do need extra help. I don't know how we are going to get on unless we have an-

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other editor. The outside contributions are becoming unmanageably numerous. If only Miss Geraldine would undertake the work, or some of it, we could dispense with a fourth member of our staff. But as things now stand, we have no choice. Still, one cannot help being sorry."

"Human nature must accept the inevitable," said Mr. Hetherly, closing his eyes.

"If the Professor asks about Miss Geraldine's scholarship," said Mr. Winter, "you will be sure to remember that we promised to tell him that she had lost it, will you not? Also her accuracy."

"Also her concentration," said Mr. Hetherly. "That's a very important point."

"Yes," said Mr. Gulliver, "and perhaps that is not such a lie after all."

"Anyway," he added, with a sigh, "it has taken another direction."

They made no answer, and he left them in silence and found his way to Professor Grant's study, where Geraldine's father and Daddy Durham awaited him. He was struck with the ashen look on Professor Grant's face, but did not venture to make any inquiries after his health. It was a common habit of the Professor's to shut himself up for several days, and

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then resume his normal life as though there had been no interruption of ordinary intercourse.

"Mr. Gulliver," Professor Grant began at once, "I wanted to settle this matter of the new secretary, but before deciding, I wished to ask you a few questions about Miss Geraldine. If she chooses, she can work better than anyone. Isn't that so?"

"It used to be so," Gulliver answered gravely.

"Then you mean that there is a change?" the Professor asked in his stern, cold way.

"Miss Geraldine seems to care even less than usual for the scholar's life," Gulliver answered. "Since she has been at home she has not attempted to work at the Dictionary. I reserved a large number of slips for her to sort, but she has not yet looked at them."

"Then, pray, what has she been doing?" said the Professor irritably.

"She has been enjoying—the open air," Gulliver replied, looking rigidly in front of him.

"And she probably needs it after her term's work," put in Professor Durham gently.

"You have therefore had no chance of judging of her present qualifications?" continued Professor Grant.

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"I have had some talk with her, and venture to think that her brain is in a somewhat lethargic condition," said Gulliver, "and—"

"Well?" asked Geraldine's father, tapping his desk with some impatience.

"Her power of concentration appears to be very considerably weakened," said Gulliver. "But I noticed that six months ago."

"Is it worse now?" asked the Professor.

"Yes," said Gulliver grimly.

"You are inclined to think that her collaboration would on the whole not be an advantage?" remarked the Professor. "Do not hesitate to be quite frank, Mr. Gulliver. You know of course, that I had set my heart on her working at the Dictionary; but you also know that the most important point after all is that we should get on quickly, and that the fourth member of our permanent staff should be thoroughly efficient and enthusiastic."

"I think we should probably progress more quickly and satisfactorily with someone who—who cared more for scholarship," Gulliver said.

The Professor remained silent.

"Miss Geraldine has yet to learn that scholarship is an elusive thing," added Gulliver, "and that one has to pursue it and grasp after

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it again and again. Accuracy also is an indispensable quality. She does not realise this."

"I am afraid what you say is quite true," said the Professor, after a pause. "I am much obliged to you for speaking so openly to me. I must have a talk with Miss Geraldine myself; but your words echo my own opinion. Nevertheless, it is disappointing that she should have failed us."

"Failed us, sir?" Gulliver exclaimed indignantly. "Oh, no, not that. Anything but that. It would not be possible for her to fail us. She would stand by us to the last, and work for us day in day out if we were ill and could not manage without her help. But you can't wonder at her not wanting to lead the scholar's life. She's young and joyous—she's all the things we're not—she's full of life and fun—she's—"

He stopped. The Professor was staring at him.

"I am astonished at you, Mr. Gulliver," he said, in his iciest manner.

"Not more astonished than I am at myself," Gulliver said, and he went quietly out of the room, not turning once either to look or to speak.

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In the hall he met Geraldine who had come back from a stroll with Harold Warwick. She had a large bunch of honeysuckle in her hands, and honeysuckle in her hat.

"Hullo, Mr. Gulliver," she said. "I am coming into the library now to put in an hour or two at work. I must look out some of those wretched old quotations and hunt up those awful old spellings. I'm quite aware I've been neglecting my book-worms shamefully. But for the life of me I can't tear myself away from that fascinating young man. However, I've sent him away now. He has gone."

"Has he gone away altogether?" asked Mr. Gulliver, rather eagerly.

"Do you want him to go?" Geraldine said, half in mischief and half seriously.

Gulliver looked at her bright face, and his own words to her father echoed back to him: "*She's young and joyous—she's all the things we're not.*"

He hesitated one moment and then he said:

"No, Miss Geraldine. Not if he makes you happy."

"Come along," she said. "You're the brickiest book-worm in the world. I've such a lot to tell you all. I scarcely know where to begin. What about Father? Have you been seeing

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him, or have you been dismissed without an audience? ”

“No, I have been telling him about your mental lethargy and your loss of concentration,” Gulliver answered, smiling indulgently at her.

“Good!” she said. “It sounds rather like softening of the brain, but no matter!”

“I only hope I have not made things worse for you instead of better,” Gulliver added. “I was not very discreet.”

“Never mind,” she said. “Father and I will have to have a long talk, Mr. Gulliver, and he will be awfully angry with me in any case. A little more or less anger cannot make any difference. But I don’t believe you weren’t discreet. I believe you said just the right thing, and that Father is making up his mind this very moment that I am not a desirable person for a permanent secretary.”

And indeed Geraldine was not far from the truth in her statement; for after Gulliver’s sudden outbreak and retreat, Professor Grant was ominously silent for a few minutes, and then turning to Daddy Durham he said:

“That practically decides the whole question. If Geraldine is able to exercise an influence of that description on a scholar like Mr. Gulliver,

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she will probably be a hindrance and not a help to the Dictionary. I admit that he pointed out her disqualifications for the work; but that he should have deliberately proceeded to make excuses for her is a sure sign to my mind of her undermining frivolity. No, I must give up all idea of her services as secretary, at any rate for the present. I shall write and engage that brilliant Balliol man who ought to have come here the other day. I hesitated because he asked for a higher salary than I was prepared to give. But the unexpected legacy from James Howard has obviated that difficulty."

"Ah, those legacies," Professor Durham said meditatively. "Difficulties will arise, and I suppose you will have to deal with them sooner or later."

"There will be no difficulties so far as I am concerned," answered Professor Grant coldly. "The lawyers will communicate with—with the other legatee, and that ends the whole matter."

"Do you really think that ends it?" Durham asked. "You cannot, surely."

"And, pray, why not?" returned the other.

"But, Grant, you cannot imagine that Geraldine will not have questions to ask you?" said Durham. "Even if she had not been

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anxious and curious to know more about her mother before this episode of the legacies, it is only reasonable to expect that she should wish to hear more now. And how are you going to meet her? "

"I shall meet her as I have always met her, with silence," said Professor Grant.

"She can't always be put off," said Durham, shaking his head. "She will insist, and your very silence will prove to her that there is something to conceal."

"I do not intend to speak to Geraldine of her mother," Professor Grant said. "This has ever been my fixed determination, and I see no reason for changing it."

"Will you let me tell her, Grant?" Daddy Durham asked eagerly. "I have not broken my word to you, as you know. But I own to you that I find it increasingly difficult to keep faith with you. She has questioned me so closely these last days, that I have been more than ever ashamed of myself for deceiving her. She has the right to know that her mother is alive. I beg of you to give me back my promise."

"I cannot," Professor Grant answered. "I see no reason for doing so."

Daddy Durham, who was sitting on the sofa,

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came and bent over his friend's desk. His kind face wore an expression of real distress.

"Old friend," he said gently. "You and I don't believe much in a scheme, do we? Dogmas and doctrines and spiritual guidance are not for you or me. But sometimes in the wilderness of human affairs one comes unexpectedly upon a sign-post set up by human hands. One may trust them because they are human. James Howard's double legacy to you and her seems to me of that nature."

"But not to me," Professor Grant said. "Not to me."

"Yet it brought you thoughts of her," Durham said. "Your face tells me this."

"I have passed on again," Grant answered. "I owed it to myself to pass on."

Daddy Durham took up his pipe and his old felt hat, and went towards the door, but unlike Gulliver, he stopped when he got there, and held the handle.

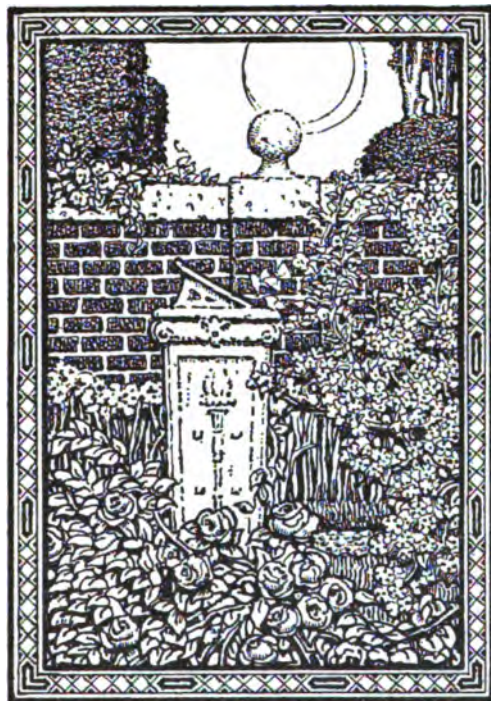
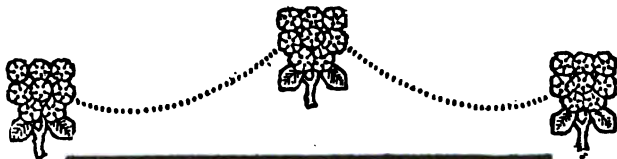
"I can't bear to think that I have been deceiving her," he said, with intense sadness. "When she finds it out, she'll turn from me, and I shall have deserved it. For she has always trusted me, and she'll learn that I have failed her. She would never have failed any one of us. Mr. Gulliver was right."

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The door slipped from his hand as he went out, and he did not hear the Professor calling him back.

“Come here, Durham,” he cried. “You shall have your promise again. You—”

There was no answer, and the impulse of the moment died at its birth.



CHAPTER NINE



CHAPTER IX

SUFFERING AND HEALING

GERALDINE was sitting at Gulliver's desk, installed in his chair, munching at the coffee chocolates so carefully chosen for her, and toying with the new box of her favourite cigarettes put ready for her use. The book-worms were a little comforted. They had their girl-comrade safely in their midst again, at least for the moment. For the moment she was theirs, cut off from outside influences; though it was evident that these influences were still at work in a strangely persistent fashion.

"So you can't wonder at my feeling very kindly towards him, dear book-worms," she was explaining. "The bit of news I've been telling you about my mother is the only bit of news I've ever had of her, and it was he who brought it. Of course, I was grateful to him. I should be a monster if I weren't."

"Is that the only reason why you feel very kindly towards the young squatter?" asked Mr. Winter.

"Oh, no, no, Mr. Winter," said Geraldine.

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"I like him for himself, too. He's awfully attractive. I've been confessing to Mr. Gulliver that I know I've been neglecting you all, but that I have simply not been able to help myself. I've just had to be with him. I don't suppose he really is a wonderful person, but he seems wonderful to me."

"But I understand from outside sources that he is by no means a scholar," said Mr. Winter dreamily.

"Have I not told you that's why he is wonderful?" remarked Mr. Hetherly, closing his eyes.

"Well, he knows his Georgics, every word of them," said Geraldine, mischievously. "That's more than I do. Do you know your Georgics, Mr. Hetherly?"

"I fear not now," answered Mr. Hetherly, with severe dignity.

"And he knows book-keeping by single and double entry," continued Geraldine. "Do you know book-keeping by single and double entry, Mr. Winter?"

"I fear a subject of that nature is beyond me," replied Mr. Winter, shaking his head gravely.

"Lily Lagoon, Lily Lagoon," she said, smiling to herself. "I really think we must throw

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the three fish-ponds into one, and call it 'Lily Lagoon.'"

The book-worms remained silent, though mystified.

"Yes, we've had such delightful talks together," she went on. "I've heard about such strange things. I've never before been so interested in hearing about another country. He really has a capital power of description. He draws a few strokes, as it were, and a living picture rises before you. Why, I can see the stockmen mustering the cattle, this very moment, and hear the crack of their long whips."

She took up one of the slips of paper as she spoke, glanced at it listlessly and threw it down. Some verses she had learnt that morning from Harold Warwick were running in her mind, chasing away all thoughts which had to do with etymologies and obsolete forms of words and subtle changes of meaning.

"I wonder whether I do remember those lines," she said. "Let me see. Yes, yes, of course!

"'Twas merry in the glowing morn, among the gleaming
grass,

To wander as we've wandered many a mile,
And blow the cool tobacco cloud, and watch the white
wreaths pass,
Sitting loosely in the saddle all the while.

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"'Twas merry 'mid the blackwoods, when we spied the
station roofs

To wheel the wild scrub cattle at the yard,
With a running fire of stockwhips and a fiery run of
hoofs,

Oh, the hardest day was never then too hard!" *

She was smiling to herself and rocking herself backwards and forwards to the rhythm of the words. Mr. Winter looked at Mr. Hetherly uneasily. Mr. Gulliver did not look at either of them. He rose from his chair and passing to the table where some of the books of reference lay open, buried himself in Wycliffe's Bible for a few moments, and then returned to his desk.

"What a different life from this!" Geraldine went on, clasping her hands on the top of her head. "Good Heavens, what a different life! It's almost laughable to think of the contrast. All that stir and movement and adventure there—and here—Early English Texts and dialect-dictionaries and vocabularies and these hundreds of slips of paper to be sorted and edited. And for what?"

Suddenly she remembered the book-worms.

"Oh, I don't mean that," she said, impulsively. "Isn't it a good thing we don't mean half the horrid things we say? The truth is,

* Adam Lindsay Gordon.

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the young man has got into my brain. And the strange part of it is that I feel I have known him for years."

"And you've only known him for two days," said Mr. Winter reflectively.

"And what difference does that make, pray?" asked Mr. Hetherly. "Time only matters for what we put into it."

"Ah, that's what we've been saying!" exclaimed Geraldine eagerly.

"Have you?" asked Mr. Gulliver, in a voice which had a note of pain in it. But he added immediately:

"I believe Mr. Hetherly is right, and that Time does not teach us much in our knowledge of each other."

"We learn the real things at once," said Mr. Hetherly; "that is to say, the things which are real for us, and which may have no meaning to other people."

"And which may come to have no meaning to us, either," said Mr. Winter, shaking his head.

"But don't you see we have no concern with that, Mr. Winter?" said Geraldine, impulsively. "We can't arrange our minds, our spirits, our hearts for the future. At least I can't. Perhaps a man like Father might. In-

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deed I can see his mind mapped out in alphabetical sections down to Z! But my mind isn't like his, thank Heaven! Much to his disappointment, as we all know. I wonder whether it is like my mother's."

"I believe your mother must have been like you," Mr. Gulliver said gently. "You must have got your gay spirit and bright ways from her. I wish we had known her, so that we also, as well as the young squatter, could have told you about her."

"Yes," said the others.

But Geraldine did not hear the regret in their voices, and went on:

"Mr. Warwick said that the old man who left the legacy described her to him as he knew her, twenty-one years ago,—and it might have been myself. I can't tell you the number of times I've made that young fellow repeat the whole story. He has been wonderfully patient and kind. Though he did ask me at last whether I did not also want to hear all about himself all over again."

"And what did you answer?" asked Mr. Hetherly.

"I said, 'Of course I do, heaps of times!'" she replied.

"You could scarcely have said anything dif-

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ferent since he put the question to you," remarked Mr. Winter thoughtfully.

"I didn't want to say anything different," she laughed, "for it's quite true. Oh, you mustn't look so sulky, Mr. Winter! Nor you either, Mr. Hetherly! I'm shocked at you both. Follow Mr. Gulliver's example, and be generous."

Mr. Gulliver looked up from his papers and smiled at her praise which he knew he deserved more than she would ever realise; for he loved her to the very depths of his scholar's heart, and would have gone to the uttermost ends of the earth for her; and the only service she required of him was the service of standing aside and making way for a stranger. But her praise was precious to him, for all that; and he even laughed with just a suspicion of gentle superiority, as she rallied his colleagues, and commanded them to be more pleasant.

"If you go on being cross," she threatened, "I shan't tell you about something awfully interesting. Yes, I shall keep it all to myself, though I don't know how I'm going to manage to be so secretive! Now, that's right. I knew you would not continue to be disagreeable. Well then, listen. Yesterday I actually saw Charlotta Selbourne, the actress. You know

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how often I've longed to see her. Well, yesterday I had quite a long talk with her—and where do you think. In our barley-field. I was so excited I didn't know what to do, and the young squatter turned as sulky as you were a minute ago. But I didn't mind. I knew I could put that all right! And meantime there was she, this great and famous actress, face to face with me. I've hung about outside the theatre for hours hoping to catch a glimpse of her sometimes, and never with any success. And there she stood, in our barley-field, wanting to ask a favour of me. Wasn't it curious? She'd been calling at the house, hoping to have the chance of seeing this room because of the old oak-panelling, you know. She had heard of its great beauty, and thought she might get some hints from it for one of the scenes in her new play. Davy brought her to me. He hadn't the heart to send her away. I didn't dare press her to come into the house then and there. But to-morrow is Father's Oxford day, and we've arranged an appointment for twelve o'clock."

"You've asked a lady, an actress, to come to the house?" said Mr. Gulliver.

"A lady, an actress?" repeated Mr. Hetherly and Mr. Winter together.

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"Father need not know," Geraldine answered recklessly. "It is his Oxford day, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is his Oxford day," said Mr. Gulliver. "But it's unwise of you to ask a lady to visit you—an actress of all people, too—you know your father's feelings on the subject. I really advise you to reconsider it, Miss Geraldine."

"Yes," said Mr. Hetherly. "That's my advice also."

"And mine also," said Mr. Winter.

"Quite impossible," laughed Geraldine. "She's coming, and you'll all have to stand by me. There's no harm in it, and even if there were, I shouldn't care! Don't look so grave, all of you. My brain can't stand it!"

"And, pray, what is it your brain can't stand?" asked Daddy Durham, who at that moment opened the door. "We've already been hearing about your mental lethargy this morning! I hope there's no fresh development! Come out to the bowling-green and tell me about it. I want particularly to talk with you."

"Particularly?" she asked. "For I don't think I ought to forsake my book-worms. I've been neglecting them shamefully. Look here, Daddy, they've put this pile of slips ready for

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me to sort, and I haven't begun the job yet. Isn't it awful of me?"

"They will forgive me for taking you away," he replied. "There is something I wish specially to say to you."

His manner was suddenly so earnest, and he had such a troubled expression on his face, that Geraldine at once put her arm through his and led him into the garden.

"What is it?" she asked lovingly, as she stroked his hand. "You don't look yourself, dear little old Daddy. Has Father been worrying you? I suppose he has. Mr. Gulliver looked like a ghost when I met him coming out of the study. He is always wretched when Father has one of his moods on. I wonder what will happen to me after my turn. Something pretty bad, I suppose. For, do you know, Daddy, I've made up my mind to ask Father some of those questions which I've asked you so often, and which you can't answer,—can't or won't—I've never known which it was,—and yet I believe you would have helped me if you could, you little old dear. For you've never failed me in anything, have you?"

"Yes, I have," he said, with great sadness, "and some day you will know it, Geraldine, and then you'll shut your heart against me."

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"I can't imagine myself doing that," she said.

"And yet you'll do it," he answered. "It is inevitable."

"Is it about this that you wanted to speak to me?" she asked gently.

"No," he said. "That will come in its own time. But I wanted to beg you to go to your father and ask him all and everything you wish to know concerning your—your mother. Take no refusal. This is the moment. Her dear name has come up in connection with the legacy. Don't let it die down again."

She turned to him with a startled manner.

"You said '*her dear name*' as though it were something precious to you," she exclaimed.

"Yes," he said, almost in a whisper; "it was precious to me."

"Then you knew her?" Geraldine asked in a strained voice.

"Yes," he answered, with bowed head. "I knew her."

"And you never told me—all these long years we've been together," she said, "the numberless times I've asked you—oh, I would never have believed it of you."

They had walked first on the bowling-green which was Daddy's delight, and had passed

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through an archway of the yew hedge into the plantation, strolling on until they had reached a gate leading out into the road. There was a bench here, and Geraldine sat down and covered her face. Daddy Durham sat near her.

"I would never have believed it of you," she said, with something like a sob.

She got up and left him alone, without even glancing at the little old figure that seemed suddenly to shrink into itself. She did not remember his loving tenderness, his abiding sympathy, and the thousand and one things which went to make up the sum total of her childhood's happiness. She remembered only this one thing—his silence; in this moment of her bitterness—this only.

But the next minute she ran back to him. She sat down beside him, holding his hand, stroking it, comforting him, wooing him.

"Little old Daddy," she said. "I'm a brute to have said that. I take it all back and entreat you to forgive me; what can I do to wipe out the pain of it? Oh, you must know that people never, never mean half the horrid things they say. Why, of course, of course, I know it isn't your fault that you haven't told me—it's Father's fault—he has made you promise

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not to speak of her—it would be just like him to have done that—and out of loyalty to him you've had to be silent, even though you've wanted to tell me—isn't it so—I'm sure it's so—turn your dear, little, old face to me—speak to me. I can't bear to see you suffer in this way, and through me."

He did not give any sign that he was conscious of her words, but half whispered, as in a dream:

"I loved your mother, but your father won her."

"And she didn't love you?" Geraldine asked, with the pitifulness of a mother for a stricken child.

Daddy Durham looked up hearing the music of love in her voice. He was healed.

"No, dear, she didn't love me," he said simply.

"She must have been out of her senses to reject you, Daddy, and take Father," she said indignantly.

"Alas," he said, "the wind bloweth where it listeth."

"But she wasn't heartless to you?" Geraldine asked, with a tone of fierce protectiveness in her voice.

"No, no, she was always kind," he answered

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gently. "But—but she laughed at me a little."

"As I have laughed at Mr. Gulliver," she put in. "I shall never laugh at him again."

"No, do not," he said. "Love should never be laughed at."

Then he added at once:

"But it was only because she did not understand what it all meant to me. She had a heart of gold. No one ever had such a heart, Geraldine. She was capable of endless devotion and affection."

"You felt it dreadfully that she did not love you," Geraldine asked, with tender sympathy.

"Yes," he answered.

"You've been lonely and sad, Daddy?" she asked.

"Yes," he answered.

"But this has been your home, hasn't it—the Yew House has been your home, hasn't it?" she said, almost pleadingly.

He shook his head.

"Isolated people have to learn to make their own homes," he said. "No one person's home is ever another person's home, my little Geraldine."

She was silent. Thoughts about the pain of life, which had never before come within reach

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of her, knocked softly for admittance at the door of her brain.

And now it was little old Daddy's turn to comfort.

"But I have had you, dear," he said, smiling at her. "I'm not forgetting that. Why, you've been the greatest joy of my life since you first needed my care. Do you remember Shelley's words of Byron's daughter, Allegra? They were meant for you and me:

"With me she was a special favourite. I had nursed
Her fine and feeble limbs when she came first
To this bleak world. . ."

The tears stood in Geraldine's eyes. She drew a little nearer to him and put her hand in his.

"I don't know how it is you haven't hated Father for taking her from you," she said, after a long pause.

"The bonds of friendship tightened between us because we—we both lost her," Daddy answered.

"Then it's true that she died!" Geraldine exclaimed. "Oh, I've had such doubts even about that—nothing has seemed certain. But now the ice is broken and you can speak of her, you'll tell me, won't you? You'll tell me all

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you know of her—you won't keep silence any longer, even if Father wishes it."

"I want you first to go to your father and beg him to speak," Daddy said, with trembling voice. "And if he won't, my little Geraldine—then—"

At that moment a carriage dashed past, and a lady in it, seeing Geraldine, called to the coachman to stop, and bent forward eagerly as the young girl ran up to greet her. It was Charlotta Selbourne.

"My dear," she said, "how pleasant to catch a glimpse of you! To-morrow at twelve! Don't you dare forget! Is it all right about the Oxford expedition? No rocks ahead?"

"No, no," said Geraldine eagerly. "It's all right. To-morrow at twelve."

The carriage passed on again, and Geraldine returned to Professor Durham.

"I couldn't help running off, dear," she said excitedly. "It was Charlotta Selbourne, the actress. She's coming to see me to-morrow."

"Charlotta Selbourne," he repeated.

"Yes," she answered.

"Charlotta Selbourne coming to see you," he repeated.

"Yes," she said.

He seemed half dazed.

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"Coming to the house," he went on. "But your father——"

"It's his Oxford day," she interrupted. "He'll be going off at nine to-morrow. He need not know anything about her visit. Miss Selbourne wants to see the oak-panelled library, and I've promised to show it to her. I was going to tell you how I met her the first time yesterday, in our barley-field—of all the places in the world."

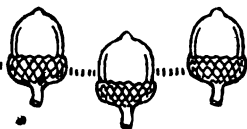
"Here?" he said. "Do you mean in the barley-field here?"

"Yes," she answered. "She called at the house, and Davy brought her to me there. I'll tell you the whole story. But don't look so troubled. What does it matter if Father does find out and is angry. I don't care. I'm tired of his tyranny and his fads. I intend to throw them off and be free. I believe I'll go to him now this very moment while my spirit is up. And I'll ask him all the things I want to know. Shall I go now?"

"Yes," he said, with curious excitement, "go now."



CHAPTER TEN



CHAPTER X

A FATHER'S CONDEMNATION

GERALDINE went straight to her father's study, and knocked at the door. He called out, "Come in," and when she entered, he looked up from his papers and books, glanced at her with eyes that had never shone with kindly welcome, and said in his usual impersonal manner:

"Ah, Geraldine, so it's you. I want to speak to you on an important subject."

"And I want to speak to you," she answered, nervous in spite of her natural courage; for there was something in him which had always checked her vitality, and injured her spirit. She had never been at her best with him: partly because of their difference in temperament—a difference not bridged by love—and chiefly because she was ever conscious of his abiding disapproval.

"Yes," he said, signing to her to be seated; "it is necessary that we should have some conversation together on the important subject of your profession."

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"Ah, but I have not come to talk about my profession," Geraldine said, remaining standing in front of his desk, and gathering together all her latent pluck. "That can wait."

"Indeed?" he answered coldly.

"Yes," she said. "That can wait. But there's another subject that cannot be put off any longer, Father. I wish to know my mother's history."

He made no reply to her, but opened one of the drawers and took out some proof-sheets. He rejected these and looked for others.

"Father," she said, with a note of pleading in her voice.

He still went on searching for what he wanted, and gave no sign that he had even heard her.

"Father," she said, "yesterday afternoon I knocked in vain at your bedroom door, begging you to let me come in."

He was still silent, but she went on bravely, refusing to be discouraged by his behaviour towards her.

"I thought at last you would speak to me about my mother," she said. "I thought that as the ice had been broken, and that message had come from over the seas, you would—"

In her eagerness she had forgotten her awe

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of him, and was leaning over the corner of his desk, supporting herself with her hands and disturbing some of the papers which he had placed there.

He looked up, and seeing her, pushed her roughly away.

"Some other time, some other time," he said harshly. "Don't you see that I am busy, that I have work to do—important work."

Indignation flushed her cheeks and trebled her courage, but for the moment she kept her emotions well under control.

"Father," she said, standing where he had pushed her, "has it never struck you that I have the right to know more about my mother?"

"The right?" he asked, sitting up rigidly, and staring at her.

"Yes," she answered, "the right to know more about her memory if she is dead."

"If she is dead," he repeatedly slowly.

"Yes," she replied, "if she is dead. Do you suppose that thought has never entered my mind? And even if it had never entered my mind before, you can't imagine that I should hear of this legacy left to her and not want to ask you face to face whether it has been left to some one who really died twenty years ago, or who only died to you twenty years ago."

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He remained silent, but his face was painfully strained.

"Perhaps you think I have never cared all this time," she went on. "Of course, I haven't cared every hour, every minute. No one could. And young people accept things as they find them. But there have been moments when I've cared passionately. Only you've always been unapproachable. I've never felt it possible on one single day of my life to come and tell you my secrets, much less ask you yours."

He stirred uneasily in his chair.

"But don't you see the justice of what I've forced myself to ask now?" she said. "Don't you see that now I'm grown up, I have the right, if my mother is really dead, to know where her grave lies? And if she isn't dead, I have the right to know who she is, and how I may reach her, before it is too late."

He still did not answer, and by this time Geraldine had lost all sense of timidity; and the barrier of awe thus broken down, she let herself go forward with the full rush of her emotions.

"Even if she is dead, I want her history," she said. "You can't suppose that I don't know there has been some mystery about her."

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Your indifference to me, your daughter; your absurd hatred of women; the way you've cut me off from all intercourse with my own sex; everything points to the fact that even if she is dead, it wasn't her death only, but something in her life which turned you to stone—if you weren't stone from the very beginning. But if she didn't die, but ran away from you, for instance, I shouldn't blame her—no, not one atom. I should have run away from you if I'd been your wife. Any woman would. It's been hard enough to be your daughter—but your wife—think of it—what a fate. Why, ever since I remember you, you've never once unfrozen yourself to give me one bare morsel of warm, human affection and understanding. Understanding indeed! The old man who left the legacies told Harold Warwick that you had 'the big mind which understood.' The big mind which understood! I've never known it in you—I'd have adored it in you if I'd known it. The love and adoration which I could have given you, I've had to give to darling old Daddy Durham. If it had not been for him and the book-worms, yes, and even for Davy and Christian, I should have grown up like you—absolutely loveless. Imagine, Davy, the coast-guardsmen, and Christian, the Norwegian

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ship's cook, helping to prevent me from growing up loveless, like you! Oh, I don't say I'm alone in this matter—I'm only one of the many children in the world who've had to go to the servants for sympathy and understanding instead of to their parents. And yet, Father, I would have done anything on earth to win your love—but you've never cared—you've only cared for the Dictionary—for roots, cognates, dead languages, not for living human hearts. Oh, I don't know what you're made of—I don't know what you've done with your feelings—you're not human—no one's human who doesn't give out a little love—but you—”

She stopped suddenly, conscious at last of his pale and agitated face and his distressed manner.

She had never before seen him look like this. She knew it was her work. Pitifulness and remorse swept over her.

“Father,” she cried, “forgive me—what have I been saying to you?”

Professor Grant had risen quietly from his chair, and stood over the desk leaning with his hands on it, and his head bowed: a figure of great dignity: receiving as it were, a sentence of condemnation from which there was no ap-

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peal. He spoke in a low voice, and with obvious physical effort.

"You have been saying hard things for a parent to hear," he said. "But if they are just, the time of necessity comes when he must hear them and bear them."

He came out from the space between the chair and the desk, and moved slowly round to the front of the desk, where he paused before Geraldine.

"I will tell you about your mother, but you must give me time," he said, almost inaudibly.

"Oh, father," she pleaded, "tell me now—now—whilst—"

He raised his hands slightly, as though in sorrowful expostulation.

"Be merciful," he said. "You have driven so many things home to me. You must give me time."

She stepped back reproved and ashamed, and watched him as he went towards the door

He stood hesitating a moment, and then came slowly back to Geraldine.

"Kiss me, my daughter," he said.

The tears welled up in her eyes. She put her arms timidly round him, and kissed him in

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silence. She watched him again as he left the room; and after he had gone, stared at the door, waiting, listening, her arms fallen nervelessly down, her young face drawn into an expression of wonderment and unrest. She must have stayed thus for several minutes, but at last she moved to the armchair, and leaned forward in it, lost in thought.

At first she sat resting her elbows on her knees and staring at the door; but after a time, her hands sought her face and covered up its sadness. There was no sound of sobbing or weeping; her grief and her remorse were not able to find any such merciful loosening of the net in which she was held.

About half an hour after Professor Grant had been seen to leave the house and wander off in the direction of the pine woods, his favourite place for rest and meditation, Daddy Durham, who had been waiting anxiously to hear the results of Geraldine's interview with her father, having sought her in vain both in the oak-panelled library and the garden, came to the study and found her thus chained in body and spirit.

He sat down beside her, and with all the gentleness of a mother drew her hands away from her face.

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"Daddy," she said, "is it you?"

But that was all she said, and her voice seemed to come from a long distance.

"Did he tell you what you wished to know, dear?" Daddy asked, as he stroked her hand with a touch as soft as rose leaves.

"He will tell me later," she answered in that same far-off whisper.

He looked at her suffering face, and had not the heart to question her further. He waited for some sign to show him that his presence was comforting to her, and as none came, he slipped quietly out of the room, intending to linger near her, and be ready when she needed him. As he was pacing up and down the picturesque terrace on to which the Professor's study opened, Mr. Gulliver arrived in the courtyard with a large bundle of letters, and hastened up the steps to speak to him.

"Some letters for you, Professor," he said, "several for the Dictionary, and one for Miss Geraldine. Where is she, I wonder?"

"She is in the study by herself," Daddy answered. "She has had an interview with her father. She is in trouble. I went in to see her, but I could not reach her."

"Shall I go?" Gulliver asked wistfully.

"Yes," said Daddy. "You may succeed

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where I have failed. Go and take her the letter."

Gulliver went in. She looked at him as if she scarcely saw him and said:

"Is that you, Mr. Gulliver?"

"I have a letter for you," he said, standing near her.

"Thank you," she answered, putting her hand out mechanically for it, and then dropping it on the floor.

He picked it up, put it on the desk, stood for a moment puzzled and in doubt as to what he should do next; and then realising that her mind was far off, in a distant desert where he could not penetrate, he crept away, almost noiselessly, as one passes before a high altar in a temple.

He shook his head as he joined Daddy Durham on the terrace, and the two men waited together in silence, their thoughts holding sad communion. Then all at once Harold Warwick came swinging through the gate-house door into the courtyard, youth and good spirits holding him in their radiant keeping.

"Do you think I could see Miss Grant for a moment?" he asked, greeting them, and pausing at the foot of the steps. "Or, if I couldn't, perhaps you would give her this

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bangle from me. She has been careless enough to drop it in the barley-field. It doesn't look as if she valued her gold medal much, does it?"

"The young for the young," said Daddy Durham gently to Gulliver, and he nodded to Warwick and pointed to the study.

"You'll find her in there," he said. "She is in trouble."

"In trouble!" Warwick exclaimed, and without waiting for further authority or explanation, he sprang up the steps, and disappeared into the room where Geraldine still sat speechless and immovable.

"Hullo!" he called out in his fresh voice.

She did not look up.

"Hullo!" he tried again, "here's your bangle. I say, you know, you oughtn't to drop this sort of thing in barley-fields—emblem of your wonderful scholarship, too! Here, let me put it on your wrist again. That's the proper place for it, not barley-fields!"

She did not answer, did not stretch out her hand.

"I say," he coaxed, "you don't seem to know that I'm in the room."

"Yes, I do," she replied, the ghost of a smile coming into her saddened face.

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"Well, I don't think I'm making much impression on you," he said quaintly.

"Yes, you are," she answered, her voice beginning to travel back from that long and lonely distance.

"Not nearly so much as I expected," he persisted. "What's the matter? Are you in trouble? Anyone been unkind to you? I'll let them know. Who has dared to be unkind to you now that I'm home?"

"No one has been unkind to me," she said. "It's I who have been unkind. I've been saying the most cruel things to my old father. I wish my tongue had been cut out before I'd said them."

He pulled a chair near her, and sat down beside her, bending forward eagerly.

"You must cheer up," he said. "You mustn't look like that, you know. I can't stand it. And I don't suppose you really have been saying such awful things."

"Yes, I have," she answered. "They were cruel because they were true. And he knew it."

"But he'll forget about them," Warwick urged. "He'll take a good pull at the Dictionary, at the—what-do-you-call-them—cognates or something of that sort."

She shook her head.

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"He went away broken-hearted," she said. "He had learnt the truth; and we oughtn't to have the whole truth told us about ourselves. We can't bear it."

"Look here," he said, "you must pull yourself together and cheer up. I tell you your father isn't remembering anything about what you said to him. I bet you he's thinking this very moment of grammars and glossaries. By Jove, don't you see I'm becoming a scholar myself! You don't half appreciate me!"

She smiled a little at his words, realising he was seeking to comfort her, but her thoughts returned instantly to her father.

"I never intended to say all I said to him," she began. "I came to ask him to tell me my mother's history. And suddenly all my pent-up feelings broke loose and—"

She left off, and looked at him in a helpless, hopeless way, as one asking for protection.

He drew his chair nearer to her.

"You know what you really ought to do is to have a jolly good cry," he said. "But you're not the crying sort, are you? That would be the best thing, though. And the next best thing is to open your heart and speak out to me as to your best friend in the world: which of course I am. You can't go on like this."

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You must speak. You'll feel more yourself then. I say, how cold your hands look! Here, give them to me. That's right. I'll soon warm them up. My word, though, you must have been in an awful rage! My hands always get deadly cold when I'm in a temper. There now, that's the way to warm them up! And now you'll know how to warm mine out in the Bush!"

She smiled again, and he, encouraged to see a slight change in her, continued in his coaxing way:

"Ah, that's better! I was beginning to think I was not able to cheer you because I was only a poor devil of a squatter. I was beginning to wish I had taken one of those ridiculous degrees in some rubbishy subject or other, and had some real scholastic claim to be considered by you as an intelligent human being."

"I like you best as you are, with no intelligence at all," she said, with a faint tone of fun in her voice.

"Ah, now you're coming to," he said. "Now I recognise once more the person I've known all my life! And look here, I don't mind how much you insult my intelligence as long as you cheer up and tell me what has been

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troubling you. You know, you and I must not begin to have any secrets at this time of our lives. It's too late for that, isn't it?"

A distinct expression of amusement came over her face, and Warwick seeing this, added with a grave proprietary air:

"By Jove, it's a mercy I came home when I did. I couldn't have had this sort of thing going on in my absence. It makes me wonder whether I ought to run the risk of being away even for a short time!"

So in this manner, half playfully, half earnestly, he dealt with her despondency and coaxed her into utterance at last. She told him, little by little, the whole of her painful interview with her father. She owned that she came to him already chafed and irritated by his tyranny which pressed on her in many ways, and when he refused to answer her or take any notice of her earnest entreaties, the anger and indignation of years surged up within her and broke down all her self-control. She did not excuse herself: she did not spare herself: she said quite frankly that no one could have been more cruel than she had been. And then she went on to speak of her mother, and she told Warwick that as soon as she had said the words: "*Even if she is dead, I want*

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her story," the feeling was borne in upon her that her mother was not dead.

"That's what I've been thinking," Warwick said quietly. "But I scarcely liked to suggest it to you."

"Will you help me to find out?" she asked, with some of her old impulsiveness.

"Of course I will," he answered. "We'll find out together, you and I."

His eagerness heartened her. She was comforted. But a pang of regret shot through her as she thought suddenly of little old Daddy Durham and faithful Gulliver who had come to help her and gone away saddened because they could not reach her.

She looked at Warwick intently for a moment and said:

"I don't know why I should have told *you* this."

"Because I was the right person to tell," he replied, with decision.

"There were others," she continued, as though disputing with herself, "people I had known and trusted all my life—whereas you—you are a stranger—and yet—"

"Why, you told me that was the last thing I seemed to you!" he exclaimed. "Those were your very words. You mustn't go back on

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them. And even if I were a stranger, there's no choice about that sort of chance. It can't be helped. It comes like the north wind."

"Yes, I think it does," she said, giving in.

"You won't go back on your words will you?" he said eagerly.

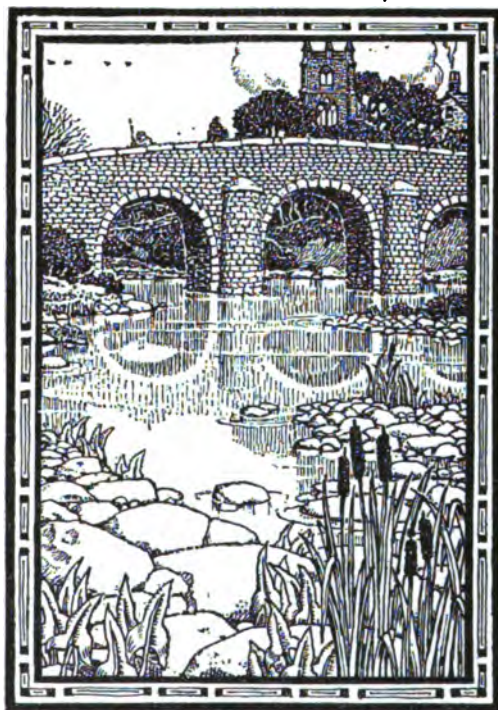
"No," she answered, "I won't."

"And you see," he added, "I am certainly the one to whom you should speak your thoughts about your mother, I who have brought you direct news of her, twenty-one years old, it is true, but for all that, the first tidings you've ever had. Doesn't this convince you? It does me. Come, let's leave this stuffy old study and go on the wallaby for some fresh air. No wonder you get these morbid ideas. The dust of centuries jams up your brain. What you want is a bit of Bush life. And you'll have to have it as soon as possible! For I can't hang about here too long, you know!"

They were both smiling when they crossed the courtyard and disappeared through the gate-house doorway. Daddy Durham and Gulliver saw them pass out.

"All is well with her," Mr. Gulliver said, in a voice which trembled a little.

"Yes," replied Daddy gently. "The young for the young, Mr. Gulliver."



CHAPTER ELEVEN

CHAPTER XI

THE OXFORD EXPEDITION

It was about nine o'clock when Geraldine came into the oak-library the next morning and rang for Christian. She had passed a sleepless night, and her face showed signs of a weariness foreign to her nature. There was another change too: a certain softening of her features, a tenderness in her eyes, gracious first-fruits of some secret lessons learnt in life's programme of difficult problems. She waited a minute or so, and as no one answered the bell, she rang it again, this time impatiently, and Christian opened the door and advanced slowly towards her, looking the very picture of Norwegian melancholy. Geraldine glanced at him and laughed in spite of herself; for Christian always amused her.

"Good-morning, Christian," she said. "What's the matter with you? You don't seem in very good spirits."

"Good-morning, Miss Geraldine," he answered drearily.

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"I believe you've heard from home," she said. "You've got your well-known native country look on your face."

"Yes," he replied, "I've had letters. I am feeling the homesickness. I am having the thoughts of my native country."

"I wish you'd have thoughts of your native cooking instead!" she suggested. "That would really help me with the dinner. I don't feel a bit inclined for housekeeping this morning."

"I also not," Christian said, shaking his head. "I am thinking all the time of the mountains and the fjords of the Nordland, and my home in Lofoten. Ak, and the fishing fleet! I see it. Why did I ever go away? Last night I dreamt I dried the fish on the rocks. I smelt it. Ak, if I could go back!"

"If that's how you feel, why on earth don't you?" said Geraldine.

"No, thank you, I stay here," he answered emphatically.

"Ah, that's like all the foreigners, Christian," she laughed. "They praise their own countries, their own scenery, their own customs, but settle down comfortably in England. But if you're homesick, why don't you at least take your holiday? You didn't take it last

THE OXFORD EXPEDITION

year. You know you can have three weeks when you like. Time enough to go back and dry some cod on the rocks, and return to your duties here. Tom could do the cooking. He cooks very well. Makes much better pastry than yours, though he has only one eye! Though to be sure, it's a light hand you want for pastry, and not necessarily two eyes! So you see, you can go if you wish. Tom can do your work for the time being, and we can get extra help from the village."

"No, thank you, I stay here," Christian replied decidedly. "Perhaps the homesickness goes away."

And he added with a grim smile:

"He is better already, that homesickness."

"That's good news," said Geraldine, who had learnt long ago that praising Tom was a cure for most of Christian's maladies, mental or physical. "And now I suppose we must both make an effort to speak of the dinner. Have you anything to suggest, for once? Do use your brain, Christian. I'm so tired this morning."

"Cold salt-beef and pickles," suggested Christian mechanically.

"But we had that yesterday," Geraldine remonstrated. "And Mr. Gulliver says that

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they had it the day before yesterday. As far as I can learn, you've been giving them that all the time I've been away. And sausages for breakfast for months running. No wonder they look frail."

"They'd always look like that," Christian said. "It isn't the foods. The foods is always splendid, and first-rate cooked. It's the Dictionary."

"You don't take half enough care of them," Geraldine said. "You never did. It's a good thing I've come home. They might fall into a decline. And where would the Dictionary be then, I should like to know? No, Christian, we must feed them up. Then they'll get on quicker with their work, and I shan't have to help them. Do remember that. You know how I hate working at the Dictionary. I think I'll ring for Tom. He's a good hand at suggesting a good dinner. He has a ready brain, has Tom. I'm often amazed at his intelligence, which seems to be on the increase."

"Roast fowls, nice dish of veal cutlets, big suet pudding with treacle, pineapple cream, Welsh rabbit," said Christian quickly, putting himself in front of the bell.

"Excellent," said Geraldine gravely. "Couldn't be better. They'll get strong on

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that in spite of the Dictionary. And what about the homesickness now? ”

“Gone,” answered Christian, with his grim smile, as he retreated towards the door.

“Send Davy to me at once,” she called to him. “I want him to arrange the drawing-room for my lady-visitor.”

He nodded and left her, and Davy arrived soon afterwards, with a duster and a feather-brush under his arm, and a number of beautiful flowers in his apron.

“I thought you’d like these flowers for the drawing-room,” he said. “We must make it ship-shape for that beautiful lady. Ah, Miss Geraldine, she is beautiful and no mistake. I got up early and swept the carpet superfine for her. Polished the furniture and cleaned the windows for her. The room downright shines. Now I’ll put up the fresh curtains, and the job’s done. And here’s a letter for you, Miss; someone from the Running Stream left it a few minutes ago.”

Geraldine stretched out her hand eagerly for the letter, and forgot all about household duties as she read Harold Warwick’s spirited writing. He commanded her to have good quart pot tea and to eat a sensible breakfast; to begin the day cheerfully, and not dare to

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look as she did yesterday. He said he would be with her in an hour's time, when he hoped to learn that she had carried out his wishes.

After she had read the letter once, she read it through again, and would probably have done so a third time, if Davy had not coughed a long bronchial cough which he knew from experience always arrested her kindly attention.

"Davy, your cough is bad again," she said, looking at him at once.

"Yes, Miss Geraldine," he said meekly, "it's a tiresome complaint. But as I was saying, the drawing-room downright shines. And now I'll put up fresh curtains. Perhaps you'll like to see it when it's ready."

"Yes," she answered, "I want it to look at its best for Miss Selbourne, and I'll come and give it a few finishing touches, and arrange the flowers after my own fashion. And, Davy, be sure and get Father off in good time for his train. I shall be rather anxious until I know he is safely out of the way."

"So shall I," said Davy, "it's a dangerous job having this lady up at the house, Miss Geraldine. You are daring, and no mistake."

"Everything will be all right if Father leaves in good time," Geraldine said, smiling.

Davy stood thinking a moment, and without

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giving any warning of what he was going to do, went deliberately up to the old grandfather's clock and put it forward three-quarters of an hour.

"There," he said proudly, "that settles that. And I'll just run and take a look at the other clocks too. And don't you worry yourself. I'll see that the Master doesn't lose his train."

He flew off, leaving Geraldine amused and a little dazed at this prompt way of dealing with a difficulty.

"How deceitful I'm becoming!" she thought as she sank into Gulliver's chair. "And all because I'm going to receive and welcome one of my own sex. It's evidently demoralising to one's best nature to have female visitors."

And then she took out her letter, and became so engrossed in it, that she did not notice that Mr. Gulliver and the two other book-worms had come into the library and were all standing staring at the clock.

"A quarter to ten!" exclaimed Mr. Gulliver. "Impossible. We are never late."

"No," said Mr. Hetherly. "Something must have gone wrong with the clock."

"A most unusual occurrence for the clock to

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be wrong," said Mr. Winter. "Perhaps we have made a mistake for once."

"No," said Mr. Hetherly; "it was exactly nine when I finished my third cup of coffee; it always is exactly nine o'clock at that particular item of the day's programme."

"Things are all awry here," remarked Mr. Winter. "The young squatter has upset us all, including the clocks."

Geraldine looked up and greeted them.

"Come, come, Mr. Winter, you mustn't blame the poor young squatter for that!" she said. "Davy and I are the culprits. He put the time on and I let him do it. You see, I'm a little nervous about Miss Selbourne's visit. I pretend not to be, but I am. I keep on saying to myself: 'It's all right. It doesn't matter if she does come before Father goes. I don't mind.' But I do mind, really."

"It would have been wiser if you had refrained from asking her to come," Mr. Gulliver said. "I think it is most risky, Miss Geraldine. A hundred things might happen. Supposing, for instance, that Professor Grant did not go to Oxford. What then?"

"Oh, Mr. Gulliver, don't suggest that!" she put in. "Besides, he always does go to these vacation-meetings."

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"Yes, that's true enough," he answered. "But it is risky. I shall be glad when the visit is safely over."

"So shall I," said the others in chorus.

"I think I shall too," Geraldine said quaintly, and they all laughed and took their places at their desks.

"Does Professor Durham know that Miss Selbourne is coming?" asked Mr. Gulliver.

"Yes; he seemed quite shocked," she answered with resignation.

"I don't wonder," said Mr. Winter. "You see, it's serious enough that your visitor should be a lady; but that she should be an actress, too, makes the circumstances doubly complicated. I myself have always understood from outside sources that actresses are specially difficult people to deal with. Suppose now, your father and she were to meet on the threshold. What then? Supposing that he were to order her away at once. There would be a scene."

"It is always surprising to me how little you know about human nature, Mr. Winter," remarked Mr. Hetherly, closing his eyes. "If she were an actress, there would not be a scene. She would deal with the situation so tactfully that, instead of being dismissed, she would be welcomed. Let us be thankful that things be-

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ing as they are, Miss Geraldine's visitor is an actress. She will know what to do should occasion arise. And it may arise. One can never be sure."

"You all seem to have made up your minds for some catastrophe," Geraldine said.

"No, no," said Mr. Gulliver kindly. "We were only surmising. It was stupid of me to begin it. Your father never misses one of these meetings. All will be well this time, and I advise you not to repeat the experiment."

"I shall tell him about it when it's over," Geraldine said earnestly. "And I am going to have a good try for freedom of thought and action, Mr. Gulliver. It will be much happier for us both if we can come to some workable understanding, won't it? I suppose people do sometimes get to understand each other a little, even after long years of not knowing anything about each other."

"Yes, I think they do sometimes," he answered gently. "Time in all circumstances offers knowledge, and it is for us to accept or reject."

"No one would reject it consciously," she said, turning to him gravely.

"Oh, yes, Miss Geraldine," put in Mr. Hetherly. "Knowledge is a responsibility."

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Many of us don't like responsibilities. They weigh us down."

"You see a remarkable instance of this in Mr. Hetherly himself," said Mr. Winter quaintly. "His own stupendous knowledge of life weighs him down and everyone else too. I scarcely dare to think of what will happen to us if we remain in his company even a few months longer. Indeed, stupendous is not the word. We shall have to coin a new word worthy of his knowledge and introduce it into the Dictionary."

"That reminds me," said Mr. Gulliver, "this word '*aroynt*' remains to be dealt with. I must submit it to Professor Grant when he returns from Oxford. There seems to be no satisfactory history of it. Shakespeare has: '*Aroynt thee, witch,*' but beyond that one instance, there—"

The door was opened hurriedly and Davy came into the library looking quite distracted.

"Miss Geraldine," he said, "I put all the clocks on three-quarters of an hour, and went to hurry up the Master for his train, and he says he is not going to Oxford to-day."

"Not going to Oxford!" they exclaimed together.

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"No," repeated Davy. "Not going to Oxford, not going anywhere."

"Well, we must make the best of it," Geraldine said, trying to appear at her ease. "It can't be helped. It's awfully unfortunate, but there it is."

"You must put the actress off," Mr. Gulliver said. "Luckily enough there is still time. It won't take more than half an hour to cycle over to Milchester."

"But I can't put her off," answered Geraldine. "People like Miss Charlotta Selbourne wouldn't understand being put off. The world waits on them and for them. I couldn't think for a moment of asking her not to come."

"It would be much safer," urged the bookworms.

But Geraldine, whose spirit was now up, shook her head determinedly.

"It simply can't be done," she said. "You seem to forget who she is. It is a most tremendous honour for us that she should be coming here. For she is a great genius, you know, a 'Samuel Johnson,' a 'David Webster,' a 'Century' of the stage. Of course, she can't be put off. No, we must just think it out, and contrive something. You'll help, won't you?"

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All of them, including Davy, looked so limp and hopeless that Geraldine laughed, and with her laugh felt her youthful courage and buoyancy return to her in tenfold measure. The book-worms had collapsed in their chairs, and Davy was leaning listlessly against the wall, having apparently lost the use of his brain and his backbone. They did not seem promising material for active service, although they all said:

“Of course we’ll help you.”

And then Gulliver added:

“I must say that for the moment no plan suggests itself to me.”

“Nor to me,” said the others together, gravely shaking their heads.

“What about you, Davy?” asked Geraldine.

“The wind’s out of my sails, too,” he answered.

“Well, it’s a good thing the young squatter is coming soon,” said Geraldine. “He will probably be able to suggest something.”

Her words had a remarkable effect on the company. They looked up instantly, and began with brisk animation to discuss plans of action. Mr. Gulliver was to take that troublesome word “*aroynt*” to the Professor and keep him engrossed in the study of it for an

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hour or so. In the realms of comparative philology endless hours were but as minutes of briefest duration; so that there was every reason to suppose that Geraldine's father could be kept focussed on his favourite subject for an indefinitely long period, long enough in which to receive many secret visits from actresses and other more dangerous examples of the female sex. But in order to provide for contingencies, Mr. Winter and Mr. Hetherly were to hover around the study, each in a different direction, and each armed with a statement on paper of some subtle philological difficulty which was impeding the progress of the morning's work. So that if the Professor chanced to get tired of "*aroynt*" and to dismiss Mr. Gulliver, and to venture forth from his den, he would still have to deal with two determined assailants. Nor was this the whole of the scheme. Davy made the wise suggestion that Professor Durham should be asked to remain in the study the whole morning and keep the Master interested in his new grammar.

"It's Persian or Portugee, or something like that," he said. "They talk a rare lot about it when they're alone together. It's their bit of private spree."

He also suggested that he himself should

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use this opportunity of presenting the monthly house-accounts.

"It's a day or two sooner," he said, "but no matter. The Master never knows the date. And he's mighty slow over figures. They take all the go out of him. He's no good for anything afterwards. He sits in his chair and dozes. He wouldn't know if Miss Geraldine had a dozen lady-visitors."

Geraldine laughed.

"Davy, you're developing a wonderful brain-power," she said. "The atmosphere of the Dictionary appears to be telling favourably on everyone's intelligence except mine! You are all most awfully helpful and kind. With four or five people to stand by me, I certainly ought to come out of this ordeal all right. Well, I'll run off and find Daddy Durham."

Davy opened the door for her and followed her out. Mr. Hetherly and Mr. Winter wrote down their questions on a large piece of foolscap paper, and Mr. Gulliver looked up the documents in connection with the history of "*aroynt*." As extra ammunition he collected all the slips relating to "*asquint*" and one or two other words which were difficult philological nuts to crack.

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"It's remarkable how easy it is to continue deceiving when you've once begun," said Mr. Winter. "I've always heard from outside sources that deception was only kept up with great harassment. I don't feel harassed. I feel stimulated."

"I congratulate you on your mental balance," returned Mr. Hetherly. "I feel greatly harassed. And there is cause for bewilderment. A legacy, a lady-visitor, an actress, all perfectly unusual phenomena—and last, not least, that young squatter. That's the gravest item of all. Isn't it so, Mr. Gulliver?"

"Yes," answered Mr. Gulliver quietly.

"I believe I do feel harassed after all," said Mr. Winter.

"My advice is that we both go and choose our patrolling-grounds," said Mr. Hetherly. "Then we shall know exactly what to do in the event of Mr. Gulliver failing to detain the Professor long enough in his study."

They went off, leaving Mr. Gulliver deep in his task. A few minutes later he was interrupted by Harold Warwick, who opened the garden-window and called out:

"Is Miss Geraldine here?"

"No," said Gulliver rather formally.
"Miss Grant is not in the library."

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"Where shall I find her then?" Warwick asked, with easy good-nature, coming into the room and leaning against the bookcase.

"She has probably gone to arrange the drawing-room for her lady-visitor," Gulliver vouchsafed, bending over his papers intently.

"I suppose the Professor has gone safely off to Oxford?" Warwick asked.

"No," replied Gulliver, still not looking up. "He is not gone to Oxford."

"Then what on earth are you all going to do?" said Warwick.

"We have already settled on our plan of action," remarked Gulliver, with stern reserve.

"What is it? I hope you're going to let me have a hand in it?" said Warwick cheerfully.

"I do not remember that any part has been assigned to you," Gulliver answered with continued reticence.

"But you oughtn't to leave me out, you know," Warwick urged. "That isn't fair on me."

"Isn't fair on you?" repeated Gulliver, turning to the young squatter for the first time. "I don't quite follow you. You see, we've looked after Miss Grant for so many years now, that it would seem almost unfair to

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us that any stranger should think his services to be necessary at a crisis."

"I say, you know, you are rather hard on me," Warwick said. "I can't help wanting to serve Miss Grant. Who could? And it isn't my fault that I haven't been here all along. But now I am here, I count."

"You are very sure of yourself," Gulliver said.

"Yes," he answered. "One has to be. If one isn't, one loses the game."

"I think you are right," Gulliver said slowly.

"You see," continued Warwick, "I could ask for an interview with the Professor and keep him for a long time with details about my old boss who left the legacy. He hasn't heard a quarter of what I could tell him. He couldn't refuse to receive me after having been so rough to me the other day."

"Perhaps you might be of some use," said Gulliver, leaving his desk, and coming nearer to Warwick. He paused, and then confessed with some effort:

"You were of use yesterday, when we failed. No doubt about that."

He paused again, and after a silent struggle with himself, held out his hand to Warwick.

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"We shall have to be friends, good friends," he said with a sad smile. "You are right. Now you are here, you count. I'll go and tell the Professor that you wish to see him."

Geraldine, on returning to the library, found Warwick standing by the table where the reference-books lay open. He was fingering listlessly the 1611 Bible.

"What do I see?" she asked gaily. "Are you looking out some spellings for the Dictionary?"

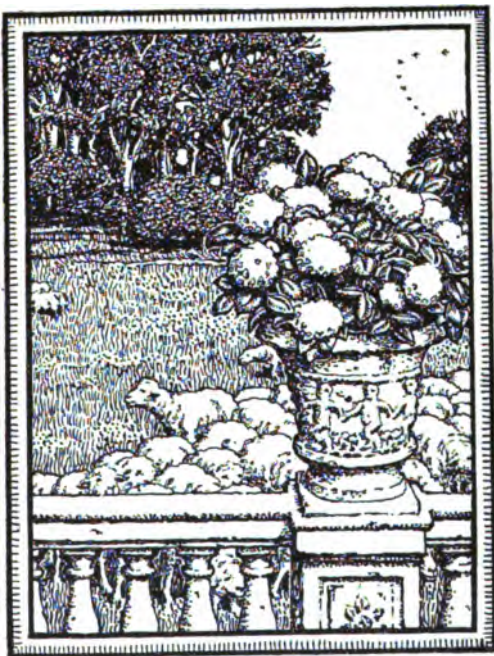
"I'm afraid not," he answered, smiling. "But you've got a lot of funny old books here, haven't you?"

And he added:

"Your old Gulliver is a good old sort, a generous old sort. Do you know he loves you? He's rather like these fine old books—nothing petty about him—but not much life in him. But he loves you."

And he laughed a little; not scornfully; still he laughed.

"Don't laugh," she said gently. "I have learnt that love must never be laughed at."



CHAPTER TWELVE

CHAPTER XII

TWO WOMEN

Now, by a strange perversity, Professor Grant, who seldom sat in the oak-panelled library, forsook his own study that morning, and to the despair of the conspirators came into his secretaries' room and settled down in the armchair. All attempts to dislodge him were made in vain. Daddy Durham was especially distressed by his failure, and had to be calmed down more than once by Geraldine, who was the only philosophic member of the community. She said:

"Don't be upset, Daddy. It can't be helped. Why should you mind so much? You know Father and I are bound to have our talk out. It all belongs to that. And if he and Miss Selbourne meet, well, they meet. We can do nothing."

"They mustn't meet," Daddy said, with curious excitement.

"Why not, if I am prepared for Father's anger?" she asked.

He looked at her, and some words rose to his

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lips, but he suppressed them and hurried away from her. He returned, however, watched her arranging the flowers in the drawing-room, and said with that same excitability in his manner:

“Geraldine, I should like to catch a glimpse of her—just a glimpse.”

“Of course you shall,” she laughed, teasing him. “Why, I believe you are as susceptible as Davy to woman’s beauty!”

But he did not seem to notice her fun. He walked about restlessly, picking up an ornament and looking at it in aimless fashion, moving a chair, fingering a book, putting a picture straight. Finally he disappeared, much to Geraldine’s relief; for in spite of her self-contained bearing, her nerves were a little on edge, and she was beginning to be anxious. It was nearly half-past eleven, and her father still held possession of the library. If Mr. Gulliver, who had just gone in to him, should fail, as all the others had failed, she would herself have to make some final attempt. She was not intending to give up without a last effort, the pleasure of receiving Miss Selbourne in her own way and carrying out her harmless programme free from her father’s interference. But Gulliver did not fail, although it seemed at

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first that he too was to have no better success than the others. He arrived armed with a bulky packet of papers, his pen under his ear, and a certain professional exclusiveness in his manner which meant that everything else in life was dead to him except the demands of the Dictionary.

"Professor," he said, "I am very much worried over the history of '*aroynt*.' For some time now I have been collecting many different versions of it. I have, in fact, no less than one hundred and twenty-six here; but none of them are satisfactory. I have been wondering whether you could give me some of your time this morning, and clear up for me this serious difficulty. I've been waiting to see you in your study. If it is not troubling you too much, perhaps you will come there."

"Won't it do as well here, Mr. Gulliver?" Professor Grant asked listlessly.

"Well, you see, the books we shall need are there," said Gulliver. "I believe we shall have to consult the Dialect dictionary and the Old English vocabularies. It would be more convenient there—for several reasons."

"Some other time, Mr. Gulliver," said Professor Grant, waving him away. "I do not feel inclined for work this morning."

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Gulliver looked crestfallen for the moment, and said in a sad tone of resignation:

"Of course, I must not press you. Indeed I should not have dreamed of disturbing you, but that the incompleteness of this word and of one or two others makes a discouraging gap in the continuity of the compendium. I do not see how we are going to issue the next section until these matters are cleared up. But perhaps you will be good enough to help me on some other occasion during the next few days."

The Professor stood up. He could not allow himself to hinder the progress of the Dictionary.

"I'll come to the study at once," he said. "It is better to set to work. Somehow I had fancied I wanted a rest this morning. But you are quite right to urge me. I have always owed a great deal to your enthusiasm, Mr. Gulliver."

He seemed feeble and shaky as he went out of the oak-library, followed by Gulliver, who drew a deep breath of relief at the outcome of his enterprise, and at the same time experienced an uneasy feeling of guiltiness.

But in excuse to himself he said:

"It would not have been bearable for me to have failed, and for that young squatter to

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have tried his hand afterwards and perhaps succeeded. No, that would not have been bearable."

So the library was free at last; and none too soon; for the front bell rang punctually at twelve o'clock, and Davy had the delight of ushering Miss Charlotta Selbourne into the drawing-room, where Geraldine was waiting to welcome her. Then he ran to the library, put his head in at the door, glanced around and said:

"Good! Coast quite clear here!"

A few minutes later Mr. Winter appeared at the garden-window, holding his pen and his paper of questions ready for instant application.

"Ah, the Professor has gone," he said.
"That's all right."

He too vanished, and after a short pause Harold Warwick peered in at the window.

"Boss safely off! Narrow shave that, by Jove!" he said; and he passed on.

The last sentinel to look in was Christian. He came slowly into the room, gazed around him in half-dazed fashion and muttered:

"Ja, ja. The Master's not here now. No danger now. But ak, ak, if he come back, I would like to be in my native country."

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He also retreated, and for a short space of time the library was left desolate. A fanciful person might have detected an air of expectancy about the beautiful old room, and certainly it did not present its usual calm aspect, characteristic of it under settled conditions of study and thought. No, something had happened to the oak-panelled library, and "the Spirit of place" was whispering softly but clearly that something further was going to happen.

At last the door opened again, and Geraldine and Charlotta Selbourne entered side by side. They appeared to be on the best of easy terms; both were smiling and radiant. The actress was delighted with the girl's loving homage, and the girl had forgotten all her worries in the great joy and privilege of being with the gracious object of her hero-worship.

"So this is the panelled library, you see," Geraldine said. "I thought you would like to come here at once and get the atmosphere of it, you know."

"What a splendid old room!" Miss Selbourne exclaimed. "Why, no wonder my friends said I must see it, even at risk of life and limb! I never saw such panelling. I've seen many oak-rooms before, but nothing ap-

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proaching to this in richness and beauty. And what glorious wood! And how finely preserved! Not much damp here! Well, this is a treat. And the carvings, my dear. It would take whole days to examine them. And the fine old stained windows. And those stately bookcases. The place is a picture, simply a picture. And the lovely lawn spread out in front! And the splendid hedge! What a treat for the eyes!"

She moved about first in this direction and now in that, Geraldine watching her the while with intense enjoyment over her frank appreciation.

"It might have been made for my play," she said excitedly. "Nothing could be better. Yes, yes, I see the whole scene before me. Splendid! Nothing could be better. And the window leading out into the garden. And the door there. And the bookcases there. Excellent! Of course, I should not want the three desks, nor this table in the middle of the room. Just one desk, there, for instance. Yes, Miss Armitage would sit there, and when she looked up from her work, she would see into the gardens."

She became increasingly excited, quite carried away by her interest in the room itself and

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by the possibilities which she saw in it for stage adaptation. Geraldine was more and more fascinated by her, and followed her about that well-known old room, observing it with Charlotta Selbourne's eyes, peopling it, not with secretaries, scholars, and professors, but with the personages from Charlotta Selbourne's play, who became real human beings directly the actress began to speak of them. Geraldine nodded, approved, sympathised. Miss Selbourne said: "You know, George Coverdale had just come back from the war." Geraldine answered as though she knew all about him: "Yes, yes, of course he had." Or Miss Selbourne said:

"This is absolutely the right room for Jane Armitage. Can't you imagine her spending hours here, absorbed in her work and not caring in the least whether her best friend in the world were dead or alive." And Geraldine replied with fervour:

"Nasty, self-contained thing—I know the type well!"

Then Miss Selbourne, who was now living entirely in the atmosphere of the play said:

"Let me see now. How does that part go where I come in from the garden and bombard Jane Armitage in her own secluded library? Goodness, it has all gone out of my head. Oh,

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no, no! I remember now. Of course, of course! There she sits, this learned woman, doing some important translation from the Persian, and I come and rage at her, and she doesn't look up or take the least notice of what I am saying and doing. And, of course, that makes me worse. And I go on and on."

"Yes, of course, you would," exclaimed Geraldine eagerly.

The actress crossed the room hurriedly and disappeared into the garden, and the next moment she returned, impersonating the character in the play. She began quietly, working herself by gradations to her final excitement.

She said:

"Miss Armitage, I have felt impelled to come and see you, although I know you dislike being disturbed in your library. I have tried every means of seeing you in the ordinary way, but you persistently refuse to give me an interview. Now you *must* have this interview, whether you like it or not. You shall hear direct from me what I think of you. Yes, what I think of you. I have loved that man passionately, and he loved me with all the love that he was capable of, until you rose up and deliberately tried to part us; deliberately set yourself to work to win him away from me.

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You couldn't have used your looks—that's obvious enough. You used the weapon of your brains and used them for the express purpose of showing that an intellectual woman can gain the victory over a woman who is not intellectual. Those have been your very words—I have heard them in many directions and I've even heard them from your own lips, too. Oh, I daresay you have forgotten—but I have not forgotten. And let me tell you that you know very little of life and men if you think that such a victory is permanently possible. You may have gained a little ground for the time being, simply because you are both interested in that ridiculous Persian—but he is only an average man, after all, and the average man doesn't care a straw for a woman with brains really—he is jealous of them—he's as jealous of them as a woman is jealous of another woman's good looks. I know it for a fact. When men have come to me and made fun of clever women, I haven't laughed with them, I can tell you. I've said: '*Why, you're jealous.*' And that's what he'll be of you, Miss Armitage. He'll be jealous of you. You'll gain nothing by keeping him in your life—nothing whatsoever—you'll lose—you'll lose what you've got—"

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Miss Selbourne broke off abruptly, and threw herself into the armchair; relaxed from her impersonation and came back to normal life.

"That's how some of it goes," she said, "and when I've reached fever-point, I throw myself into a chair, like this, you know, and Jane Armitage looks up calmly and indifferently from her work and says with great quietness: 'I really trust you have finished. You bore me.'"

"Oh, the beast!" cried Geraldine. "It's just what she would say."

Miss Selbourne laughed and patted the girl's hand, greatly taken by her eager intensity.

"I seem to have made it real enough to you, my dear," she said.

"Do tell me how it will go on?" Geraldine begged, all her shyness forgotten.

"You'll have to come and see for yourself," Miss Selbourne answered. "You must come to the first night."

"You don't mean that, really?" Geraldine exclaimed.

"Of course I mean it," she said. "You must come to the first night together with the handsome young man who loves you. I don't

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wonder that he loves you. He would be a duffer if he didn't! But he isn't a duffer!"

"No, indeed he isn't!" returned Geraldine, and the two women laughed light-heartedly, Miss Selbourne pointing to a little low chair which Geraldine seized and in which she settled down close to the actress.

"And do you love him?" continued Miss Selbourne, evidently interested in the girl and wishing to enter into her life.

"Oh, yes, Miss Selbourne," she answered. "I love him with all my heart. I have never seen anyone like him before. I couldn't bear to be without him."

Miss Selbourne nodded approval.

"I shall come to your wedding," she said impulsively. "Yes, I must certainly come to your wedding. Tell me, when is it going to be—at once?"

Geraldine laughed.

"I don't think it will be quite at once!" she said. "You see, I've only just got to know him! I've only known him for two days!"

"Ah, well, you haven't been losing any time, have you?" Miss Selbourne laughed. "Still, you can get to know a great deal about the right person in two days. I'm sure of that."

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"That's what I think!" exclaimed Geraldine.

"And the wrong person you never get to know in two centuries," continued Miss Selbourne; "three centuries, if you like!"

"That's just my own thought, too," put in Geraldine excitedly. "I'm so glad you think that."

"It's like striking a note which vibrates, you know," continued Miss Selbourne. "If it doesn't vibrate at first, it's not going to vibrate at all. Of course, it may not continue to vibrate. That's the whole trouble. But even then, it only leaves off where the other thing didn't begin! So one has had at least something out of the music of the spheres!"

She paused a moment, and a shadow passed over her beautiful face. But she added quickly:

"Tell me about him, dear. Who is he? Where does he come from? And what brought him to this lonely but lovely place, I wonder? Had he heard of you and travelled from afar to seek you out, as princes do in fairy tales?"

"He says he has come 'on the wallaby' all the way from Australia for me," Geraldine said, smiling. "But he really came to us on a very strange errand—to bring a message from an old squatter who died out

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there, and left us some money. But it's a complicated sort of story, and I mustn't think of tiring you with it. And besides, I so long to hear something about yourself, dear Miss Selbourne. Do tell me what made you first go on the stage, and what part you first played. How I should have loved to have seen you from the very beginning! Do tell me, will you! I know it's dreadfully bold of me to ask, but I'm so passionately interested in everything to do with the stage. Do you know, it is most strange that you should have come into my life now, because—"

She hesitated and then went on:

"Oh, I'm not shy, really, for I know the greatest people are always the most generous."

"Well, dear," encouraged Miss Selbourne.

"Well, you see, I've always longed to be an actress myself," Geraldine said. "Father has brought me up as a scholar, and expects me to choose the Dictionary, or something else equally learned, as my profession. But before you came here the other day, I had made up my mind to break the news to him that I intended to try and go on the stage."

"But this is most interesting," said Miss Selbourne, with sympathetic kindness. "I shall have to hear more about it, and put you

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through your paces. You're young enough, and fair enough, and if you have the gift, why not? And who taught you to love the stage, I wonder?"

"No one taught me to love it," Geraldine replied eagerly. "In fact, I was taught to dislike it. But something in me rebelled from the beginning."

"Ah," cried the actress, "it's the rebellion from the beginning which often means the real thing. I know it, too. I had it, too."

"Do tell me," Geraldine exclaimed. "Do tell me about it."

"Of course, I'll tell you," Miss Selbourne said, "and hear you, and help you if you really have the gift and really care. You have to be sure, though, that it's a passion and not a fad. That's where all the trouble comes in, and all the disappointment, and heart-break. But that isn't only true of acting. To succeed in anything, people have to care desperately for the thing itself, and not for what it brings with it."

"I believe I should care desperately," Geraldine said simply.

Charlotta Selbourne gave a quick glance at her. There was a ring of quiet conviction in the girl's voice.

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"What will your father say when he knows your real ambition?" she asked.

"Oh, he'll be angry and disappointed," Geraldine answered. "But in a way, things have been made easier for me by the news of the legacy. You see, Father won't really need my services for the Dictionary. He'll be able to keep one or two more secretaries. And that sets me free."

"Then it is the handsome young man who has come 'on the wallaby' who has done this for you," Miss Selbourne said. "You owe him a great deal, don't you?"

"Yes," said Geraldine, laughing. And she added seriously:

"But I owe him a great deal more than my gratitude for that."

"Why, of course," the actress said. "There is his love recognising and claiming you at once."

"But there's something more still," Geraldine said. "Fancy this, Miss Selbourne: he is the first person in the world that has told me anything about my mother, who died twenty years ago, or who—"

She broke off embarrassed.

Miss Selbourne touched her tenderly on the hand.

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"Your mother, dear?" she repeated.

"Yes," went on Geraldine, "he had heard of her from his old boss, who died out in the Bush a few months ago, and who left the legacies to my father and to her."

"To her?" asked Miss Selbourne. "But I thought you said you lost her twenty years ago."

"Yes," said Geraldine, trying to keep herself back.

"Then he didn't know that your mother was dead. What a strange thing," Miss Selbourne said.

"You see," said Geraldine, beginning to let herself go, "either he didn't know—or—or else she isn't dead."

Then with some attempt at self-control she murmured:

"Oh, what am I saying. I mustn't worry you with this."

"But it doesn't worry me," Charlotta Selbourne answered in her sympathetic way. "Only I don't like to see that shadow of sorrow passing over your dear young face."

"I've been awfully troubled," Geraldine said, the tears welling up into her eyes at the sound of the kind words.

"Tell me of your trouble," the actress

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urged tenderly. "And perhaps I can comfort you a little, being another woman. You seem to live in a world of men, don't you? And they are all very well in their way, but it's rather nice to have a woman to turn to, isn't it? We have some delicate gift of understanding which they'll never be able to reach. It's our birth-right, isn't it?"

The girl made no answer, but she glanced in quick gratitude to the beautiful face bending over her, and her hand stole into Charlotta Selbourne's hand, which lay open to receive it.

"How kind you are," she began simply, and without any hesitation. "You see it's just this. There has always been a sort of mystery about my mother, although, of course, I know that some people are reluctant to speak of their dead, and their desire for silence has to be respected. Father was one of these. He never would speak of my mother. Once or twice when I asked him, he answered that she died when his heart was young and that he could not speak of her. You would think I might have pressed him as the years went on, and as my own natural wish to know about her grew more imperative. But as the years went on, Father became more rigid, more unreachable. I don't suppose any human being ever was more hope-

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lessly unreachable than Father. Perhaps you know the sort of nature—awfully difficult for emotional people to live with—at least I think so.”

“And I do, too,” said Charlotta Selbourne acutely, “awfully difficult for emotional people to live with.”

“And it was only yesterday that I dared to speak to him,” continued Geraldine. “Think of it. Only yesterday. And I should never have dared if it had not been for the legacies. I’ve pretended to myself dozens of times that I was going to have the courage. But the moment I came into his presence, all my courage died down. But the legacy to her gave me something to start with.”

Charlotta Selbourne nodded.

“But even with that help,” went on Geraldine, “I don’t suppose I should have dared, unless I had done so on impulse, suddenly. Oh, and my tongue once loosened, I said some bitter things to him—poor old Father. Do you know, last night was the first sleepless night I’ve ever had in my life, and I spent the whole of it in going over our interview together.”

“What was it you said to him then?” asked Charlotta Selbourne gently.

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"I said that he must break silence at last," the girl answered; "and that if it was true that my mother was dead, I had the right to stand by her grave, and if she was alive, the right to know who she was and how I might reach her."

"That was reasonable enough," the actress said thoughtfully.

"Yes," continued Geraldine, "but I did not stop there. He would not answer me a single word, and my self-control gave way and I told him what I thought of his hard, cold nature. I even said that supposing she wasn't dead, but had run away from him and had died to him in that way, it wasn't to be wondered at, and no one could have blamed her, and that if I'd been his wife, I'd have done the same, any woman would have done the same."

"You told him that?" Charlotta Selbourne said.

"Yes," replied Geraldine, "and I meant it. And if it should turn out that she is alive and that's her history, I mean to find her and tell her."

"You mean to tell her?" said Charlotta Selbourne slowly. Something was working in her mind which had nothing to do with the girl's story and yet was suggested by it. And she asked again:

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"You mean to tell her?"

"Yes," answered Geraldine, "if she's alive, I shall find her and tell her that and much more too. Ever so much more. I've been longing for her all my life. There's a whole storehouse of love waiting for her. She shall have it. Why, both at school and at college there wasn't a single girl I didn't envy if she had a mother. I saw some of the mothers—such dowdy old things, some of them were, too,—but I thought they were all beautiful because they had such loving hearts. And the girls seemed to reckon on them so absolutely. They were always saying; 'Oh, mother will do this, and mother will do that. She'll manage it, somehow.' And I used to listen and wonder. I was outside that fairyland."

Miss Selbourne who had been leaning forward in her chair, sat up rigidly and made no sign of sympathy or interest when the girl paused for a moment. But Geraldine was not noticing her, was not thinking of her, and carried away by her thoughts and emotions, went on:

"And I daresay because I was outside that fairyland I've idealised it, idealised all that my mother would have been to me these twenty years, all that I would have been to her. But I am sure I would have prized her and taken

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care of her. If we'd been poor, her dear hands should have done no rough work that I could have helped. If she'd cared for finery, as I do, she should have worn such beautiful clothes—such hats—such cloaks—what shoppings we should have done together, she and I—I'd have got the money out of Father somehow or other—or made it myself—if she'd hated the dear old Dictionary, she shouldn't have worried one single minute at it—I'd have done her share for her. She should not have been bothered with roots and cognates and other absurdities of that kind. No, I should have put my arm through hers and piloted her through everything, as I shall now, if I find her. And think how different my life would have been with her. What a tender, loving friendship we should have had together on modern lines, you know: quite on modern lines: free frank companionship, and without fear. I should have brought all my troubles to her, all my joys, and all my secrets, bad and good, and all my flirtations. I should have laid everything before her, because I should have believed that she would never have failed me, being my mother."

She stopped suddenly, and saw at last the strained expression on Miss Selbourne's face and the rigidity of her attitude.

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"Miss Selbourne," she asked, "are you ill, are you ill?"

"No, no, I'm not ill," Charlotta Selbourne answered, as though in a dream. "But your words set me thinking. I was thinking how much we miss in life—deliberately put on one side."

She remained silent for a moment, staring straight in front of her, Geraldine watching her anxiously. Then she relaxed from her tension of thought, and turned to the girl with a slight laugh which had a harsh ring in it:

"My dear," she said, "mothers are not like that. Yours is a vain picture. Don't go on deceiving yourself with it. You spoke of your fairyland. It isn't a fairyland. It's a fool's paradise."

"Oh, don't say that," Geraldine said, shrinking back hurt.

"Take my advice," the actress continued, "and if she is alive, don't try to find her. For if you found her, you probably wouldn't like her, and she probably wouldn't like you. What could you have in common together since you've never known each other? The bond between you would be as nothing, meaningless, burdensome, a farce. You think I am saying hard words to you. My dear, I'm

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just speaking as a woman of the world would speak. At your age I should have felt as you feel, and wanted to do as you want to do. But because I have lived much longer than you and have thus had the chance of knowing more about human nature than you know, I say to you again, don't try to find her. You don't need her after all these years. You only think you need her. You've developed on your own lines, grown up under other influences than hers; she could never be anything to you now, nor you to her. Ah, I've hurt you, and I only meant to help you."

The music had come back into her voice with that last sentence, and she went nearer to Geraldine and held out both hands impulsively to the girl who took them readily enough, but in silence. Charlotta Selbourne looked at her and knew that she had put out a light which would never be kindled again: there would be other lights, but never that one.

"Alas, my dear," she cried, "I can't unsay what I've said, though I regret it bitterly. But this new young love which has come to you from over the seas and knows you and claims you at once, this will be your crown of life—and not that. We have to pass on—not back. We cannot help ourselves. When you've passed on a

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little, my words will not seem so hard to you. You will forgive me. But it won't be now. But when you have forgiven me, come and tell me, and let us be friends, real friends. Shall we? "

A wistful smile stole over Geraldine's face.

"Yes," she said; but that was all she was able to say.

Then the door opened and Harold Warwick appeared.



CHAPTER THIRTEEN



CHAPTER XIII

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HE greeted them both, and laughed in his gay way.

"You can't think how funny it is outside," he said. "One might as well try to get through a three-barbed wire fence. I'm not going to disturb you, but I thought I would just look in to tell you that all is well, and that it's still quite safe. When it isn't any longer, I'll cooe. But there's no danger. Davy, the Norwegian and a one-eyed man are patrolling the passages, two of your book-worms are holding the approaches from the garden, and Professor Grant is being pinned down in his study by old Gulliver and Professor Durham. I've taken my turn, too, but without much success."

"Durham," repeated Charlotta Selbourne, half to herself, arrested by the name. But neither Geraldine nor Warwick noticed her exclamation, and the young squatter turned to her and said:

"It's really the queerest household I ever saw in my life. It's certainly about time some-

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one broke up this camp and took her away! By Jove, isn't it a good thing I came home? Fancy all these precautions because she is receiving a lady-visitor and her father didn't happen to go to Oxford!"

"Your father didn't go to Oxford!" said Charlotta Selbourne. "Well, then, I must certainly be off since he so dislikes women."

"Don't go, don't go!" Geraldine said, with some of her old eagerness. "It's perfectly safe."

"Yes, I assure you it is still perfectly safe," Warwick repeated. "The Professor can't possibly come into this room except over the dead bodies of seven of her faithful slaves outside, and one faithful serf inside, myself!"

"Don't hurry off," Geraldine urged again, and this time she put her hand on Miss Selbourne's arm. "It's quite safe. They'll never fail me. You see, although Father did not go, I couldn't give up the joy of welcoming you and showing you the panelled room."

"I haven't made my visit much of a joy to you," said Miss Selbourne, shaking her head ruefully.

"Oh, don't say that," Geraldine said. "We've talked of serious things—that's all—things which you've learnt—things which I have

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to learn. That couldn't take away from the joy of having welcomed you. Do sit down again. That's good of you."

Charlotta Selbourne had returned to her chair, and put her parasol down on Mr. Gulliver's desk. There was a great gentleness in her manner. Her sympathetic nature told her that she owed every reparation in her power to this young girl whom she had wounded. She settled down and made the charm of her presence doubly felt. It was a reconciling charm, and it won the girl again.

"And how was it that your father did not go to Oxford?" she asked. "I thought Oxford was always to be relied on."

"Yes, I thought so, too," answered Geraldine smiling. "But our sad interview and the news of this mysterious legacy have probably upset him."

"And I was to blame about the legacy, you know," Warwick said. "I managed the whole thing awfully badly."

"No, that's not true," Geraldine said eagerly. "He managed it splendidly, Miss Selbourne. No one else could have done it better. He was the right person to come over from Australia."

"I believe he was," Charlotta Selbourne said,

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with playful conviction. "To look at him, I should say that he certainly was!"

"Of course I was," Harold Warwick laughed. "There could be no doubt about that! All the same, I handled the Professor unskilfully, Miss Selbourne. Couldn't make head or tail of him, you know. Had a try at him half an hour ago. Same results. Thought I'd take my turn at pinning him down in his study, and began to talk to him again about my old boss who left the legacy to him—old James Howard."

"James Howard," repeated Charlotta Selbourne to herself. She seemed to be asking herself a question, searching for something in her mind; but the young people took no heed.

"You'd have thought he would have cared to hear, wouldn't you?" continued Warwick. "But not he. I suppose I must have rubbed him the wrong way again, for he simply got up and turned his back on me. No, I could manage brumbies in the Never Never Country much better than I managed him. I haven't got the right knack with scholars in their libraries."

"Yes, yes, you have," said Geraldine. "But Father is a peculiar man, and the circumstances in themselves are peculiar. He hasn't any feeling against you personally. It is only that

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his mind is reluctant to deal with outside matters. I've told you so dozens of times! Of course, to you it must seem astonishing that he does not care to hear the story in all its details. But I'm not surprised, knowing him as I do."

"But at least you've cared, haven't you?" Warwick said.

"Yes, and I shall never forget your story of the old dying man," Geraldine answered.

"What was the story?" Charlotta Selbourne asked. "Mayn't I hear it?"

"Yes," said Geraldine shyly, "but—but it has to do with my mother."

"May I not nevertheless hear it?" Charlotta Selbourne asked, with great tenderness.

"Yes," the girl replied, touched by the real kindness of Miss Selbourne's manner. "I should like you to hear it. It's a beautiful story."

They both turned to Warwick, who laughed a little nervously, and said:

"Oh, there's nothing much to tell, you know, Miss Selbourne. She thinks it beautiful because it has given her a sort of glimpse of her mother—something she's been longing for all her life."

The actress moved her head in silent compre-

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hension; Geraldine looked fixedly on the floor, and Harold Warwick began:

"Well, then, it was just this. I had been living for eight years on a cattle-station out on the back blocks, called Murrengunna, which means the track of a foot. And one day my old boss, James Howard, was taken very ill."

"James Howard," repeated Miss Selbourne, again arrested by the name.

"Yes, that was his name," continued Warwick, who had now gained confidence. "Well, he was taken very ill, and of course, I nursed him. I was awfully attached to him, and he'd always been good to me and had rather liked me, in his queer way. He'd always been a queer old sort, and never spoke much to anyone even if he had a chance. So I was not surprised that all the weeks he lay there ill, he scarcely said a word to me. But two or three nights before he died, he made an extraordinary rally, and to my amazement, he sat up in bed and without any preliminaries, told me his life's story. Thinking over it later, I believe it was absolutely necessary for him to have poured out to some human being before he died. He began his narrative, and went on and on without any pause. I looked at him and wondered where the strength came from. But it was

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there somewhere, and it did not fail him until the story was done. It appears that he had disgraced himself irretrievably, and his family and society cast him out. It was awfully tragic to hear him stating just bare, grim facts, with no attempt to excuse himself, and not even a hint of bitter feeling against those who had judged him and turned from him. By Jove, it was tragic. Every time I speak of it, I get fearfully worked up. For you know he was not telling it to me personally. I recognised that at once. I wasn't Harold Warwick to him. I was a sort of channel of utterance. I was a priest, in fact, from whom nothing was asked except his presence. It was awfully solemn and our being alone together in that desolate place made it more solemn still."

He paused, and Miss Selbourne who was listening intently said:

"Yes, yes."

And Geraldine, too, urged him on saying:

"Yes, yes."

Then turning to Charlotta Selbourne he continued:

"But though he was not bitter, he said that in the hour of his fearful disgrace only one door was open to him, the outcast—her father's door. Her father's beautiful young bride wel-

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comed him; she stood on the threshold and received him herself; she took his hat from his trembling hands, helped him off with his coat, led him into the sitting-room, drew up a chair to the fireside for him, poured the wine for him, pressed the food on him, found a cigar for him, tried to cheer him. She said: '*A new life over the seas and fresh courage. All is not lost.*'"

Charlotta Selbourne's hand was on her breast: she was scarcely breathing.

"He called her beautiful, gracious, merciful," Warwick went on. "But it was her mercifulness which struck him most. For though she knew his pitiable history, she treated him as an honourable gentleman, who hadn't lost his own self-respect, and the respect of other people. He couldn't forget that. He was grateful for it to the end. He said several times that no man, however low he had fallen, could be anything else but better for a tribute of respect. And he described to me how she brought her embroidery, and sat by his side, now talking to him, now silent. He said he had never forgotten the pattern of that embroidery, nor the colouring. He would have recognised it anywhere, for he had stared at it during the long hours they sat together by the fire, until every stitch was woven into his own brain. He said

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it meant to him a miracle—and the miracle was that she did not despise him. And do you know, the poor old boss tried to trace it on his bed. And upon my soul, I didn't know how to stand it—it was so awfully pathetic. He—”

Charlotta Selbourne stood up, her hand still on her breast, her face ashen, her eyes straining as though into a distance.

“Oh, I remember it all so well,” she said, in a low voice. “I remember how he came into the house with bowed head, and my heart bled for him—I was so sorry for him—sorry for what he'd done with his life—sorry that he'd been cast out. I couldn't bear that he should be in such despair. It didn't seem to me right that a man shouldn't be allowed to take courage and hope again; and all through those long days when we sat by the fire and I worked at that embroidery I kept on saying to him that he must take heart and pass on. I believe those *were* my very words: '*A new life over the seas and fresh courage. All is not lost.*' He didn't take any notice of them then, poor fellow—they meant nothing to him then. It was little enough we could do for him, though we did what we could—my husband and I—”

Geraldine had sprung up from her chair, and Warwick from his.

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"You!" they cried together, when she paused at last.

"Yes, I," she answered. "I had been just two weeks married then. And two years after that I was—I was divorced."

She looked into Geraldine's face when she spoke those last words, and then went on, with an intensity of emotion which was all the more stirring because it was restrained. She scarcely raised her voice. Perhaps she could not.

"I begin to see it all now," she said, "the father hating and despising women, barring his door to them, and bringing up his daughter in ignorance of an unfaithful wife, an unfaithful mother—old names coming back from the past—old memories—James Howard, his friend of many years, disgraced and cast out—Teddy Durham—dear, kind Teddy Durham, who loved me and whom I didn't love—I should know his gentle face anywhere—how he pleaded for me—how he believed in me when there was nothing to believe in—no, there was nothing to believe in, and yet he believed in me—"

"And he does now!" exclaimed Geraldine, coming up to Miss Selbourne impulsively. "Only yesterday when I was begging him to tell me about my mother, this is what he said of my mother: that she had a heart of gold—"

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that no one ever had such a heart except her dear self—and that he believed in her unutterably—as I'm going to do."

Charlotta Selbourne put her hands on the girl's shoulders and looked into her eyes.

"And you can say that to me after what you've heard of my life?" she asked quietly.

"Yes," answered Geraldine, with a thrill in her voice.

"And after my hard words to you?" Miss Selbourne asked again.

"Yes, yes," answered Geraldine, with the same thrill.

"Oh, my dear, you're generous and merciful," Charlotta Selbourne said.

"Then if that's true, I must take after you," Geraldine said, "since we've been hearing that you were generous and merciful."

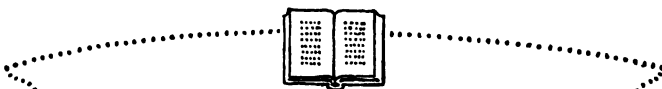
The actress made no answer, but took the girl's hands, held them to her own lips, and after a moment put them deliberately aside. Then she sat down and stared straight in front of her. Geraldine remained standing where Miss Selbourne had left her, in anxious and keen expectancy. Warwick who had moved off to the garden-window, himself greatly stirred and strained, now turned round and saw the girl he loved waiting in wistful silence, and the actress

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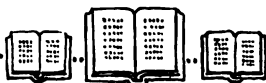
living again the days which were past, with their chances and mischances, their possibilities, their fulfilments, their non-fulfilments. He felt that something had to be done at once to loosen the tension, and he went up to Geraldine, put his arm through hers, and said half to her and half to Charlotta Selbourne.

“Shall I call Daddy Durham? Don't you think he could help us?”

The words had scarcely left his lips when Daddy Durham answered the question by his sudden arrival amongst them.



CHAPTER FOURTEEN



CHAPTER XIV

TIME'S DECREE

He was pale and greatly excited; there was a light in his eyes; there was an expression of infinite tenderness on his gentle face; the love that believes, protects, sustains, and has nothing for itself except Fate's mandate to stand on one side, the highest love bought by the heart's life-long pain, this was the love which illumined little old Daddy Durham. Charlotta Selbourne rose up to meet him, and they clasped hands in silence, and in silence looked at each other. Then she said, with a world of sadness in her voice:

"Teddy, where have my steps led me, what could have brought me here amongst you all again?"

"Time's decree, dear," he answered, "Time's decree."

"But I have no place here, no right here," she said. "I can claim nothing: not even that dear girl's generous kindness. Take me away. I want to forget that I bore a child into the

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world and abandoned her: went my own way heedlessly, and left her motherless."

"But it was so long ago," cried Geraldine, "tell her Daddy—what does all that matter now?—it was so long ago—and she herself said that we all have to pass on—tell her you've looked after me—for her sake—I see it all now—still, no one could have been better looked after—tell her how I've longed—you know how I've longed—"

Daddy Durham took Geraldine's hand and very gently led her into her mother's arms.

"Her own words give you the right to claim her, Lotta," he whispered.

And Miss Selbourne claimed her.

"My daughter," she murmured, "my own beautiful, generous-hearted daughter," and she gathered the girl to her heart, and held her there.

And as she held her, emotions of joy, gratitude, longing, sympathy, admiration and loving wonder overwhelmed them both. Reality, or that which people call reality, would doubtless offer problems to them which would not be solved; but whatever might be in store for them afterwards, they had had this one jewelled moment of which Time with all its relentless greed could never rob them.

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Whilst this moment was still theirs, the door was opened, and Mr. Gulliver, Mr. Winter and Mr. Hetherly hurried into the room, all looking disturbed and harassed.

"Miss Geraldine," Gulliver said excitedly, "we've done everything we could to prevent your father from coming. But in vain. He is coming now. The Dictionary means nothing to him this morning. Nothing. His mind and his heart are not in it."

Geraldine did not heed his words. She slipped her arm through her mother's arm, turned to the book-worms and said with tender pride.

"Mr. Gulliver, Mr. Winter, Mr. Hetherly,—my mother."

And so intent were they all, that they did not at first realise that Professor Grant was amongst them. He appeared to be as in a dream. His eyes were on the ground. His hands were clasped loosely behind him. He looked a lonely old man, pathetic in his detachment.

"Geraldine," he said dreamily, not glancing up once, "they've all been trying to keep me away from here, away from the library, away from you. But I had to come to you. I am not going to wait any longer to tell you about

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—about—your mother. I'm going to tell you now—the whole story—Durham has known it, but I made him promise to be silent—you mustn't blame him—you must only blame me. I only am to blame for the trouble which fell on me from the beginning—it was my hardness—my indifference which killed the love in her—Durham was right—if I had known how to love her better, I could have kept her by my side—I understand it now—your words—hard words, but true words—have sunk deep into my heart, have driven many things home to me, have interpreted me to myself—we will go to her, Geraldine, you and I together—”

Geraldine stepped forward.

“Father,” she cried, with a thrill in her voice.

Professor Grant looked up at last.

“Father,” she cried, “Mother is here. She has found her way to us.”

For a moment he stood bewildered, whilst all held their breath waiting to see what he would do. He put his hand to his head as though to collect his senses. He glanced at Charlotta Selbourne, glanced restlessly around him seeking for some answer to his unasked questions, and then his eyes returned to her and rested on her.

TIME'S DECREE

He was deeply moved.

He gathered himself together, came near to her, and with a beautiful, old-world courtliness raised her hand to his lips.

"Lotta," he murmured, "Lotta."

THE END

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